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SERIOUS  
REFLECTIONS

O N

*Time and Eternity.*

And some other

SUBJECTS,

MORAL and DIVINE.

With an

A P P E N D I X

C O N C E R N I N G   T H E

*First Day of the Year, how observed by the Jews  
and may best be employed by a serious Christian.*

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By JOHN SHOWER.

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The SEVENTH EDITION, Corrected and very much  
Enlarged.

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L O N D O N:

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ledge among the Poor. MDCCLII.







T O T H E  
R E A D E R.

 Whatever is likely to awaken men to the consideration of the great acknowledged principles of religion, cannot be unseasonable. And when it is every man's concern, the meanest, and weakest endeavours may be of some use. The subjects of the following reflections are most of that kind, necessary to be attended to, by all sorts of persons; and so cannot be too often prest, though in different manners.

## To the READER.

*The usefulness of the subject matter, and the smallness of the bulk, are two things which are wont to recommend a book to most readers: for which reason, I may hope, this will be read by several, who suffer much better (because bigger) books to lye by them neglected. Some may possibly give it the reading, as a new-years-gift. † And whoever shall be so far persuaded by it, as to set apart some time in the beginning of the year, for self-examination, confession of sin, repentance, thanksgiving, and solemn renewal of their covenant with God, (which several of these reflections, may not only excite to, but are intended to direct and assist him in), I am persuaded he will thank me for putting him in mind (at least) of so seasonable an exercise. The greatest part of these meditations were begun on a new-year's-day, though some others are thought fit to be inserted, as tending to promote the same design. X But knowing how much easier it is to stir*

## To the READER.

*stir up other mens devotion, than to command and keep alive my own; it is desired, that the most devout thoughts contained in these papers, may be looked upon as what the author aims at, and would persuade to, rather than what he hath already attained: as what he knows he ought to be, and do, and doth seriously endeavour, rather than what he is, and hath been; heartily lamenting wherein he hath been faulty, or defective in such duties as these, and the like reflections do oblige to, and enforce upon all, who shall read them, and therefore much more upon himself. ✕*

*That they were penned at several times, and in occasional retirements for spiritual exercises, will, with the difference of the subjects, be a sufficient excuse, that some are larger, and others shorter, and that the style is in some places more neglected than in others. \ If I may hereby render any service to the souls of men, if any secure sinner, any self-deceiving*

To the READER.

*hypocrite be hereby awakened, or any  
serious christian's devotion be quick-  
ned and advanced, I hope God will  
accept it. To his blessing I humbly  
recommend it, for those ends.* ✕

J. SHOWER.



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SERIOUS

Recd Janry 14. 1757



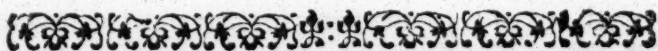


S E R I O U S  
R E F L E C T I O N S

O N

*Time and Eternity,*

This World and the Next.



S E C T. I.

*Of the changeable state, and short duration  
of earthly things; especially of man, how  
little it is considered and believed; how  
necessary it should be.*



H E N I consider that yesterday  
was the conclusion of the *last year*,  
and that I am now entered on a-  
nother; it is seasonable to reflect  
on the *mutable* condition, and  
*short duration* of all things, in this world,  
which are measured by *time*. That as they  
have their *beginning*, so they have their *end*:

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and that the distance, or space of time between the *one* and the *other* is very little. Let me not then, *O my soul!* rejoice and please myself too much in *new* enjoyments, remembring a change may be at hand, and the end is certain. ✕

Many who were *rich* and flourishing the *last* year, may be reduced to *poverty* and deep distress, before the end of *this*: who are now in a capacity to relieve others, within a few months, or a shorter space, may be objects of other mens charity. *The thing which hath been, is that which may be:* and that which hath been seen in one year, may happen in another; so easily, so quickly may a *change* be made! Riches may unexpectedly change their owners, and borrow wings of a thousand accidents, wherewith to fly to heaven for a new disposal. \* *They therefore who possess, should be as if they possessed not; for the fashion of this world passeth away.* / Innumerable casualties may effect that change, which no human art or skill can possibly foresee, or hinder. / Afflictive unexpected evils attend us every where: we cannot promise ourselves tranquillity for a *day*, much less *one year* to come. / They lay in wait for us on every side, enter at every crevice, and commonly overtake us, when we are least apprehensive of their approach. † *Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble:* he cometh up as a *flower*, and is cut

\* 1 Cor. vii. 29.

† Job ix. 25.

on TIME and ETERNITY. 9

cut down; fleeth as a *shadow* and continueth not. What then are riches, beauty, strength, and honour, the accidents of this *substance*, which is itself but a *shadow*!

How false is the hope of man, and how frail is all his glory! one day can make an end of all his riches and honours: | and yet what solicitude, care, and labour, to get what we desire of these things, (tho' often we do not need 'em) and then to *keep* what we have gotten, and then to *encrease* it, and then to *defend* it, and at last to *enjoy* it, and in a moment it is snatched from us, or we from it. His *life* is but a *vapour*, on which they all depend; then how much less are they? To how speedy an alteration are they subject! what numberless instances of this doth *one year's experience* furnish! what sadning disappointments, and unexpected calamities have befallen many since this day twelve-month! and multitudes who are now at ease, and think their mountains too strong to be removed, shall meet with sharper tryals before the end of this year. † *Alas!* how few consider or believe it, 'till they find it so! All men should count upon trouble and disappointment, suffering and sorrow in this world; and he that hath the least share, is reckoned the most prosperous man; and yet he knows not how soon his portion may be doubled. We reckon our *joys* by the absence of some degrees of *sorrow* and *calamity* that others meet with; and before the end of this year, our condition may be as disconsolate as theirs.

O my

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O my soul! tho' I know this to be true; tho' I cannot, I dare not, deny it; yet how difficult is it to conquer the love of this world, and of this body, to that degree I ought! to undervalue the interest of a short, a mutable, uncertain, and troublesome *life*, in comparison of the permanent possession of an everlasting good! tho' I know, that what is earthly and temporal must needs be thus changeable and fading; and that it is as true of *man* himself, as of any thing under the sun; yet how do I forget *what man is!* not only mutable in his *state*, his *body*, and his *life*, but in his *mind* too, so as to love and hate, to chuse and neglect, to delight in, and abhor such things at one time, as he did not before. He doth not pass the same *judgment*, nor retain the same *affections* at one time, as at another. How do I live, as if all this were as certainly false, as it is unquestionably true? Admire, love, fear, trust in *man*, as if he were the direct *contrary* to what he *is*, and seek for *immortality* upon earth, and act as if I were assured of it, and were not liable to any *change*; though I acknowledge and know the contrary. Though the *last year's experience*, and the observation of every day, doth convince me of it; though all history, and all the records of the grave attest it; though all mankind, in every age, have found it so; though it be a manifest notorious truth, legible in the various changes and calamities; but especially in the dust and ashes of all who lived before us, (our graves being often made of our predecessor's



## on TIME and ETERNITY. II

cessor's dust, and the earth we bury in having once been living) yet how little is it believed, how seldom considered! the confirmation of it which *one year* gives us, hath little influence on our hearts or lives, with respect to the *next*. + We ought, therefore, to *accustom* ourselves to these thoughts, before such *changes* shall e're long succeed. They will be less efficacious, if never admitted 'till our minds are oppress'd and feebled by the weight of affliction. We shall *then* want the vigour of *reason*, which should co-operate with the remedy; and which, if used before-hand, would help to support and stay our minds, under all subsequent revolutions. For those considerations may be able to fix and stay our minds *under* changes, that may not be sufficient to recover, and raise our spirits *after* they are dejected and fallen.



### S E C T. II.

*Of the change in mens inclinations, opinions, and actions, which one year shews; how observable it is in others; how much more discernible in ourselves. Honour and reputation, &c. how uncertainly preserved and how easily blasted.*

**W**HAT a discovery doth *one year* make of the *mutability* of *man*, not only of his outward condition, but of the *man himself*; his temper, his practice, his inclination.



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clinations, his aversions, &c. He abideth not at *one stay*; every breath of wind turns him to *another* shape. We despise *to day*, that which we admired *yesterday*; and to-morrow hate the object of our present love. We begin *friendships*, and cancel them on slight occasions; and a mortal enmity often succeeds to a tender affection: the very persons, who are in one year our darling *friends*, and possibly deserved to be so, may yet be open *enemies* the next, and seek our ruin. *Lord! what is man?* How deceitful and mutable the heart of man! we know not what other men are, or will prove to be 'till a trial; and we are equally ignorant concerning *ourselves*, 'till an hour of temptation. How patiently do we think we could bear *afflictions* 'till we feel them! how partial and mistaken a judgment do we make of our wisdom and strength, in reference to the future! we counsel others to *submission* and *resignation* in the most difficult trials, and wonder they complain so loud; when we ourselves despond, and sink under *half* their burthen; and send up our impatient murmurs to heaven, when God thinks fit to prove us by a higher stroke. We *censure* and condemn *others*, who are in an higher station, and are call'd to more difficult work than we; when by a little advancement, and the like temptation, we discover that we are *as bad* as they. They who were reputed humble, temperate, and religious, when they have been *exalted* higher, become proud, sensual, and ungodly. Had some been told

*a twelve-*

## on TIME and ETERNITY. 13

*a twelve-month* since, what *now* they are, and speak, and act, they would have made *Hazael's* answer, *Am I dog, that I should do this?* A change in the public affairs of the *state*, and by that means of particular *interests*, or some alteration of our own private circumstances, (calling us to *new duties*, and exposing us to *new temptations*) discovers us more to ourselves, and to other men, than was expected, and proves us to be very *different* from what we appeared to be.

Such a change, for instance, as from *poverty* to *riches*, from *sickness* to *health*, from *obscurity* to *honour*, from *privacy* to a *public charge*, &c. or on the contrary. Men cannot bear the *weight* of temporal happiness, but riches and honours make us to be other men than before we seemed to be. How weak a thing is man! that can not carry his own *wishes*, without falling under them: that cannot prosper in his designs, without being changed in the temper of his mind, upon every success. So true is it, that *Man in honour is like the beast that perisheth*; and changed ordinarily for the worse, as to serious religion. May we not fear, that some who a year since dared not live *a day* in the neglect of closet and family devotion, do now omit it, for many *days* and *weeks* together? and that some, who once were careful to improve the *whole sabbath* to religious purposes, now place the whole of their religion in attending the public worship, and think it enough, not for

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*that*

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*that day only, but for the whole week.* Under the afflicting hand of God, for some apprehensions of an approaching change, or sense of guilt upon great transgressions, the convictions of sin are lively, *conscience* is sensible and awake, *affections* warm, *resolutions* strong, &c. But alas ! how soon doth the case alter ! our spirits cool, our zeal abates, our good purposes untwist and die, and come to nothing. By degrees we return to *folly*, and boldly venture on *that sin* we lately trembled at. Through the want of continued smart *afflictions*, or of a serious awakening *ministry*, and friendly faithful *admonition* ; or through the temptation of *vain company*, and the remaining power of *fleshly lusts*. So that we falsify our most sacred *promises* and *resolutions*, violate our holy *vows*, cancel the bonds of God upon us, suffer the *devil* to re-enter, and prevail again, to take possession of our hearts, and yield ourselves an easy prey to his *temptations*, till our latter end be worse than our beginning.

Oh what a change doth one year let us see in *persons*, as well as things ! in *ourselves*, as well as other men ! And as it is with *man* himself, so with every thing that he values himself upon, or for which he is esteemed by others ; and even his *esteem* and *reputation* is also changeable and uncertain. Not to instance in riches, but in what is nobler, *learning*, and the improvements of the mind by study ; how soon may the violence of a *disease* disturb or stupify the brain to that degree,

## on TIME and ETERNITY. 15

degree, as shall reduce the greatest *scholar* to the pitied condition of a *fool* in *Bedlam*? and where is his reputation and renown, in such a case? But much less than that will blast the fairest *reputation*, with the far greatest part of the world: it may be lost by unwary mistakes, by false reports, by envy and malice, by the subtle hatred of *enemies*, or by the weakness and credulity of *friends*, (who will listen to every back-biter's story) or by one or two *indiscretions* of the man himself; and no man can be certain to secure his reputation whilst he lives, much less after he is dead. Who can content *all* men, however he live? And who is well spoken of by *all* when he is dead? Who is so esteemed, that some do not despise him? The wisest conduct cannot hinder, but *some* will judge hardly and amiss.

How vain and faulty is an ambition to be talked of after we are dead, which will be but by very *few*, and that very *differently*, and but for a *little while*; *There is no remembrance of former things, neither shall there be of things to come, with those that shall come after*, Eccles. i. 11. For how little a while do the proudest monuments last, that are set over the rotten flesh and bones of many, to preserve their memory? God hath promised, it is true, that *the righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance*; but it must be understood so far only, as the frame and state of this world, and the revolutions and vicissitudes of time

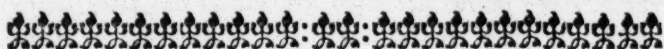


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will permit. But what good can it do us, farther than the interest of God's glory, and the good of others is concerned in it? The blessed will not need it, and the damned have no advantage by it: and no endeavours can be certain of success: for people will talk of us as they *please*; and their opinions very often change from one extreme to the other: but he who hath the loudest fame, shall only be talked of *a little longer* than his neighbours; and that by a few dying men, that must *themselves* be e'er long forgotten. And how small a part of the inhabited world is acquainted so much as with the *name* of the greatest of men in *Europe*? And how different and *contrary* are men's *opinions* and *discourses* of them, where they are known and talked of? And how many holy, excellent persons are buried in *oblivion*, or mis-represented as unworthy to live on earth, whose names will be found in the book of life? Our *life* is yet as mutable, and uncertain as any of theirs. The time is hastening, when we shall be *too old* to live, but at any time we are *old enough* to die. Our *breath* is in our nostrils; and though there be room enough for it to go out, we have no assurance that we shall have power to draw it in again. —

S E C T.

## on TIME and ETERNITY. 17



### S E C T. III.

*Of the uncertainty of living to the period of another year. The vanity of this life: the swiftness of time, and how to be improved.*

**I** Now begin another year: but what assurance have I to out-live it? I cannot say, how soon my sovereign judge may call me hence, and summon me to appear before his righteous bar. O let me not defer my necessary preparation for *death*, which may be nearer than I imagine! let me mind the great things *first*, which are of absolute necessity to be done, some time or other before I die. This perishing *body* which I have pampered and indulged, at the expence of so much cost and time, may be putrifying in a silent grave, before half this year be passed. Lord! bless this thought, to awaken my diligent endeavours to secure the blessedness of *eternity*! to mortify the desire of great things for myself, in *future years*, by the considered possibility of dying before the end of *this*: let me look into the graves of others, and consider that this may quickly happen to me, and must e're long be my own case: let me think what *this body* will shortly be, when it hath been six or eight days separated from my soul;

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how vile? how loathsome? that I may despise the beauty, and be dead to the pleasures of the body, which so easily, so suddenly, so strangely may be changed. \ For no *glass* is more brittle, no *bubble* more vanishing, no *ice* more dissolving, no *flower* more fading, no *shadow* less substantial, no *sleep* or *dream* more deceiving, no *sound* more transient, nothing more vain and more uncertain than *life*, on which all other things in this world depend. *My days are as nothing*, saith *Job*, though they lasted above two ages.

There is hardly any thing very *frail* and *feeble*, mutable and uncertain, but the Spirit of God in scripture sets forth the *vanity* of *life* by ; as if he would teach us by it, from the light of every perishing object, which our eyes behold, to reflect on our own mortality. We sleep every *night*, in the outer chambers of death: and in some diseases *sleep*, which is the *image* and picture of *death*, is taken away, to give place to the *original*, and make way for death. \ And every year, every week, every day, are we hastening to our final *change*; which may overtake us e're we are aware. \ Every day we lose some part of our lives; in our very *growth* from infancy to manhood, our life decreases, and grows less. Every pulse and breath doth tell us, we are hastening to the end of time, and calls upon us to dispatch our work.

If we consider \* *time*, to be the measure of motion, however it may seem to have  
three

## on TIME and ETERNITY. 19

three stations; *past*, *present*, and *future*; the *first* and *last* of these are not: (one is not now, and the other is not yet.) That which you call *present*, is not *now* the same it was, when you began to call it so in this line; before you found that word *present*, or the monosyllable *now*, the *present*, and the *now* is *past*. If we consider *eternity*, into *that* time never entered; *eternity* is not an everlasting flux of time; but time is a short parenthesis in a long period; and *eternity* had been the same, as it is, though *time* had never been. If we consider not *eternity*, but *perpetuity*, which shall outlive time, and ~~be~~ when *time* shall be no more. What a minute is the life of man to that? How soon must it end?

Every *word* we speak, is formed of that breath whereby we live; and we may not live to pronounce another sentence, but the lamp of life may be extinguished and blown out by a sudden blast. Every thing we do, carries away some sands of our little glass of time; and how little may remain? or how soon may the glass be broken? Our souls are in our bodies, as a little *air* inclosed in a thin *bubble*; how easily is that broken, and where are we? How many who are now alive, in health and vigour, who deliberate on their meat and drink, and are curious of air and exercise, to maintain themselves in health, and please themselves with the dream of years to come, shall never see another *new-years day*? It may be not another month, or week, or mor-

row :



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row : Many have promised themselves great things on the morrow, but died before night : let me not say, I shall not *die this day*, when I may *this hour* ; and it is but *once* for all, there is no amending an ill death, by another trial. “ When I lie down  
 “ to sleep, I hope to rise stronger and fresher, and fitter for work ; but I know withal, I may rise no more. And may not my name be on the roll of those who shall  
 “ *next* be called, at least some time *this year* ? Let me not then neglect, or foolishly delay, my *principal business*, to provide against a *change*, which is inevitable, but the time of it altogether doubtful.  
 “ Ought not my first and chiefest care to be employed, to make my peace with God ? he *alone* can be my happiness ; to his final judgment I am hastening : his favour *alone* can give me support and joy in a dying hour : to his mercy I must trust, when I leave this world, (and can have no advantage more by any thing in it ; ) that he may mercifully receive my soul at death, and be my *everlasting* portion. Do I know my life is thus vain and transient, and shall I not seriously improve it to such a purpose ? Shall these thoughts leave no *impression* upon me ? Do I breathe continually in this element of *vanity*, and yet forget where I am, and remain insensible of so near a change ? Shall these thoughts pass away as a vanishing cloud, and distill no softening drops on my soul ? Shall the image of death, which meets me e-  
 “ very

## on TIME and ETERNITY. 21

“ very where, be only like an appearing  
“ ghost or phantasm, that startles and scares  
“ a little, but is presently gone, and no more  
“ considered? Oh! let me now remember  
“ to make *God* my friend, and secure an  
“ interest in his eternal mercy, while the  
“ day lasts; yea, while my reason and un-  
“ derstanding are free, and not disturbed  
“ and clouded by fear and pain, and the  
“ disorders of the body, as commonly they  
“ are in *sickness*, if God should vouchsafe  
“ me that warning, which yet I may not  
“ promise of myself to have, for I may be  
“ cut off by a sudden stroke, before the end  
“ of *this year* I now begin.”

And how great and necessary a work have I to do in so short and so uncertain a portion of time? Endless joy or misery will be the consequence of spending this present time.† My ignorant soul must be instructed, my carnal heart renewed, many false opinions must be unlearned, and sinful customs changed, and powerful lusts mortified, and strong temptations overcome, and many graces to be obtained, exercised, strengthened and preserved, to please and serve, and glorify an holy, omnipresent God, my sovereign; and express the thankfulness of my heart and life to Christ my Saviour, and is all this nothing? Is not all my little hasty *time* too little for such a *work*? to prepare for a safe and comfortable death, in order to a blessed eternity?



## S E C T. IV.

*Of the seeming difference between so many years past, and the same number of years to come.*

W H E N I look back on the preceding years of my life, how easily can I grasp them all at once? they are even *as yesterday when it is past*. But so many years to come hath something great and vast, which fills my thoughts, and affects my mind, after another manner. Such is the difference between *past* enjoyments, and the expectation of *future*. Let me suppose the same term and duration of years, and yet how different are my apprehensions of what is *past*, and of what is yet *to come*! Things past by a remembrance of some remarkable passages, when they happened, seem to be present with me: but not knowing what may happen in the same number of years to come, I have nothing whereon to fix my thoughts. Or the reason of this difference may rather be, that men in this degenerate and necessitous state (with unsatisfied desires reaching after happiness, and sensible, nothing present can afford it, and knowing, by experience, that nothing past could have done it) are eagerly desirous of felicity; and because we know not but what is to come may  
pro-

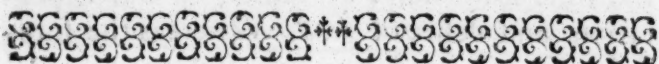
on TIME and ETERNITY. 23

procure it, we hope it will; which makes the time seem long, by reason of our expectation and desire of *good*. Whereas the foresight of *evil*, and the expectations of *that*, some years hence, makes the time rather seem short, and near at hand: so many years, to come, in expectation and desire of good, are long and tedious: such *hope deferred makes the heart sick*, even though it is of that sort, as must needs fail our expectations.

Prepare me, *Lord!* for what thy unerring counsel shall please to order, as to the remainder of my time on earth; and suffer me not to count upon a great number of *years* to come, since *this*, for ought I know, may be my last: neither let me expect rest and happiness in this world, which nothing temporal can afford. / This is not the state or season, wherein, by any promise of God, I am encouraged to hope it. And if *fifty or threescore years* to come, be thought so great a matter, and really is so, as to our stay on earth; Oh! what apprehensions ought I to admit concerning an endless *everlasting state!* / especially being as certain of the *latter*, after death, as I am uncertain about the *former*; whether so many years be yet to come before my death. Let me not hereafter be so preposterous in my solicitude, cares, and fears, as to be anxious for to morrow, and yet be thoughtless of *eternity*.



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### S E C T. V.

*The little portion of our time on earth considered, by a computation of the life of man, from the number of years and hours.*

**T**HINK, O my soul! how short is that life at longest, made up of years, and months, and days; such little parts and yet in number few. Well therefore may it be expressed, as I find in Holy Writ, by *years of number*; that is, such as may soon be numbered. When a *few years* are come, saith *Job \**, (or *the years of number*, as in the original) I shall go to the way, whence I shall not return. By *the years of an hireling*, which were not above *three*, *Isa. xvi. 14.* we usually compute *threescore and ten years*, to the life of man: let me suppose *fourscore*. The bed with most employs one half; and hardly *one in thirty* doth reach the age of *seventy years*. And † they who live to such an age, do yet complain how soon it is done. Ignorant childhood and heedless youth, and infirm old age, may be supposed to take up a third part of that time. In either of them very little of the great ends of life are answered. We ordinarily begin to reckon

\* *Job. xvi. 12. Ezek. xii. 16. Isa. x. 19.*

† *Winter Evening Conference, Conf. 1.*

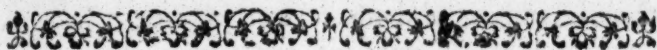
on TIME and ETERNITY. 25

on our lives from our *birth*; whereas for a good while after, we know not whether we are alive or no, but are beholding to others to make the account for us. When we first come to the steady use of *reason*, or what we call the years of discretion; how few are there, but from the prejudices of education, from the corruption of human nature, from the want of experience, from the infection of bad company, how few, I say, but spend their *younger years* in those things, which afterwards they are ashamed of, when experience hath taught them the wisdom of men? How great a part of our remaining time is taken up in the necessities of nature, about food and raiment, and in lawful cares, to support the body? And how much more than needs, in pampering, dressing and adorning it? Out of the *small remainder*, how much is employed in the concerns of a family, and near relations, in particular callings, in necessary civil business, and in getting, keeping or improving an estate? Besides all the time that is spent in recreations, visits, unprofitable discourse, impertinent thoughts, journeys, sickness, and innumerable other occasions, some allowable, some unavoidable, and many needless? After this, how little time remains wherein to cultivate and improve our minds, by languages, arts and sciences, or the knowledge of a trade, &c. How little then after all, may we say, is left for the matters of *religion*? for devotion to God, and serious preparation for another world?

## 26      *Serious* REFLECTIONS

*Alas!* how small a number of years make up the life of man! and how small a portion of that, is employed about the principal business, for which we were born, and for which we live? We divide time into past, present and future: but the *past* is not ours; the *future* is not yet, and the *present now* is past, e're the sound be pronounced. And yet this is *all* the time allotted us wherein to secure the blessedness of eternity. How many hours more of our little time might be improved than commonly are by the best? In every year there are 8775 hours: If we allow the greatest half for sleep and necessary attendance on the body, and take but 4000 hours for our work and business of consequence; how poor an account can most men give of all these 4000 hours in every year? Not one hour in *seven*, not one in *ten*, is ordinarily devoted to God, and the purposes of religion. Should it not affect us, seriously to consider this? especially, if we remember, at what an *uncertainty* we are, how small a number of days and hours do yet remain. *This* year, this month, this week, this day or hour, may be my *last*. What an unsuspected accident, or a sudden disease may do, I know not: but this I know, that there is scarce *any thing* that hath not killed some body; an hair, a feather, a vapour, a breath hath done it; and when the apostle *James* asks the question, *What is your life?* He answers, *It is even a vapour, that appeareth a little while, and then vanisheth away.* —

S E C T.



S E C T. VI.

*Of the redemption of time, how precious and valuable a treasure it is, and will be thought to be when it is too late.*

**I**S the life of man so short and fleeting, our days on earth so few, and so uncertain? How careful should I be to manage every hour, endeavouring to match the *swiftness* of time by my celerity, and diligence to improve it? I can have no business of greater or of equal moment to mind, than to secure the happiness of my soul in another world. And shall I lavish my time, and lose my pains about things unnecessary? What will all other business signify in the end, if this be neglected? Is there any interest more weighty, that calleth me from such work? Is there any thing else that so well deserves my time? That may be put into the scales, or weighed in a ballance against this? Shall *eternity*, which comprehends all time, have the least share of my time allotted for its concerns? How little a part of my time hath been hitherto employed in such work! How reasonable, how necessary is it to redeem the little inch of time that yet remains, but hastens to a period? For as there is no covenant to be made with death, so no agreement for the arrest



## 28      *Serious* REFLECTIONS

and stay of time; it keeps its pace, whether I redeem and use it well or not. —

The greatest part of our life is designedly employed to avoid death; we eat and drink, and sleep, and labour, and rest, that we may not die; and yet even by these we hasten to death. Every breath, every pulse, every word leaves one less of the number, which God hath appointed me, and carries away some sands of the glass of *time*; and yet how little care is taken to employ it well? We seldom value it, till we can no longer use it to any advantage; and though we know it can neither be retarded in its motion, or recalled when past, yet of nothing are we more prodigal. / Yea, how many complain of it as a burthen, and know not what to do with their time, are exceedingly at a loss wherein to employ it, what to do to be rid of it? But alas! how near is that change, when they shall think nothing too dear to purchase some few grains of that sand; which now seem too many, while they are passing through their hour-glass? How sad will be the review of our lost and ill-spent time? How different an opinion of its value shall we have on a sick bed, or when our time and hope is gone? How many weeks and days, and hours, *O my soul!* have I trifled away in sloth and idleness, in foolish mirth, and hurtful company, in vain thoughts and impertinent discourse, in excess of sleep, and needless pastimes, feasting, inordinate care to adorn the body, or gratify the sensual appetite? All that which is past is  
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## on TIME and ETERNITY. 29

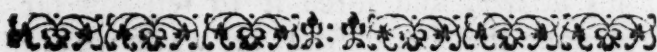
irrecoverable ; and the little remainder flies apace. How quickly will it be gone ; how soon, how suddenly, may an unexpected stroke of death conclude it ? And yet this is all the opportunity I shall ever have, to make my peace with God, and prepare for the everlasting world. —

Did we consider it as we ought, we should not foolishly throw away so much of it in trifles, and things impertinent, or what is worse. How much more might we redeem than commonly we do ? to how much better purpose might we husband it ? How much more work might we do, were we never idle, or did not loiter ? We might walk far, did we not often stand still, or go out of our way. \ We see it plainly by the great and excellent effects of some men's industry in every age. Art hath found means to set spies and watches as it were on the *sun*, that he cannot look out, but they take hold of his *shadow*, and force it to tell how far he is gone that day : And yet while we are curious in making time give a just account of itself to us, how little do we consider the account of our time, which we must shortly give to God ? Oh ! that such a thought might effectually persuade me to redeem it ! that I may not tarry till the end of time to know the worth of it ! Let me not undervalue it, while it is given to be used, that I may not eternally regret my folly, when time shall be no more.

God calls me to diligence and labour ; the *work* he calls me to is excellent, and the

### 30 *Serious* REFLECTIONS

*reward* glorious ; to know, and love, and serve, and obey him, in order to eternal life ; and shall I yet be idle ? Is this the use and end of all my time ? And do I know it, and believe it ? Do I indeed believe it ? And yet delay and loiter, and waste my precious hours in vanity ? Am I going into *eternity*, entering into another world, and know that I must be in *heaven* or *hell* for ever ; and have I time to throw away ? Am I fit to die, and to appear before my judge, or am I not ? Am I made meet for heaven, by pardoning mercy and sanctifying grace ? Have I the earnest of the spirit to witness and assure me of it ? Is my interest in the promise of eternal life as firm, and my evidence of it as clear, as it may be made ? Am not I conscious to myself, that much of this necessary work is yet to be done ? And shall such an unprepared soul as mine, be careless and indifferent how I spend my time ? —



#### S E C T. VII.

*Of the ordinances of heaven, day and night, summer and winter, seed-time and harvest ; their order and succession, established by God, is the effect of infinite wisdom and goodness. What they may teach us.*

**W**HEN I consider the beginning of another year, I can hardly avoid reflecting on it's several parts, summer and winter

on TIME and ETERNITY. 31

winter, spring and fall, day and night, and their alternate turns. This calls me to observe, and admire his eternal power and godhead, wisdom and truth, who is the great author of this admirable variety; who hath fixed the earth with his foot, and hanged it on nothing, and settled the luminaries of heaven for excellent ends: *The sun to rule by day and the moon by night,* thereby to distinguish times and seasons, to separate day and night, winter and summer, and consult the convenience of man and beast, by their due succession. *The day is thine, the night is also thine, thou makest summer and winter.* How wonderful is their order, beauty, and constant course! That when the sun withdraws, and the shadows of the evening cover the earth with darkness, to conclude the *day*; the moon and stars supply the place of the absent sun, during the *night*: And that though they differ in length, yet gradually lessen, till they are both equal at the year's end, and have made the same circuit? How excellent a work of God is that quick succession to one another? The supposition of a *perpetual night*, is a dismal gloomy thought. O what will the everlasting darkness of the infernal prison be! The sun by day enlightens the earth, directs our motion, guides our way, governs our travail, assists conversation, awakens industry, warms the earth, and air, gives life, and vigour, and fruitfulness to all things under the sun, and makes the whole inferiour creation to rejoice. X An emblem of God's universal good-



## 32 *Serious* REFLECTIONS .

goodness, who is kind to all his creatures. How admirable is its lustre! how glorious is it's light! how loudly doth it proclaim his power and wisdom! who made this, and the other lights of heaven, by his powerful word, and preserves them hitherto by his daily providence. —

If God be now so glorious, contemplated in his works, considered in the lustre of the created sun, viewed only through the windows of sense; how much more glorious will he appear hereafter, when we shall see him face to face, and nothing interpose betwixt us and his incomparable light! If mine eyes dazzle to look upon the meridian sun, in what inaccessible *light* must he dwell, who is *Father of lights*? If this lower world, the common receptacle of his friends and enemies, have so much of his glory vouchsafed them by the heavenly bodies; O what a place will *heaven* be, where, shall be no *sun* or *moon*, nor need of any, but the *glory of God shall lighten it, and the lamb be the light thereof!* —

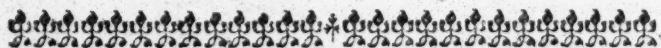
While I thus consider the sun, and the day, I must not think the *night* is useless, which discovers another part of the heavens, not discernible by the day, viz. the stars, and planets refreshing the earth, cooling the air, giving necessary rest to the creatures, &c. Their order, motions, aspects, oppositions, influences, are all useful and instructive. The agreeable mixtures of light and darkness, the regular succession of day and night within a few hours, are exceeding

on TIME and ETERNITY. 33

ing wonderful, and advantagious. In other parts of the world, where the sun beams are more direct, and it's heat excessive, God has made amends by the length of the *night*, (under the equinoctial line it is always twelve hours) and in the more northern parts, where the influence of the sun is weaker, the *days* are proportionably longer. So good is God to all his creatures, in all parts of the world. As the morning and evening answer to the day of twenty four hours ; so doth spring and autumn to the twelve months of the year, that we may not pass immediately from one extreme to another, but gradually be disposed for so great a change, as is between summer and winter, and winter and summer. So merciful and gracious, and infinitely wise is God, in all his works ! so that we cannot say, one part of the year is more necessary than another. The *winter* is as useful for the good of the universe, as the *summer* : In this we are supplied with what is necessary to maintain us in *that*. And the admirable situation of the sun (most probably) in the center of the world seems much to contribute to it. If it had been at a farther distance from us, our earth would have been in a manner desolate ; because the influence of the sun could not have been considerable : And if it had been nearer, the stars above would have wanted light, and this earth under been burnt up. The excellent order which it hath now obeyed for above six thousand years, is also wonderful. The sun never stood still but once, and that

# 34 *Serious* REFLECTIONS

that by a *miracle* ; though much inferior to that of it's daily progress. What a subject is here to admire the power, goodness, wisdom, and faithfulness of God ? *Lord ! What is man !* for whom thou doest all this ? And because I find every year that the day dies into night, the summer into winter, and herbs and plants lose their beauty and verdure, and shed their blossom ; may I not hence learn to consider, and prepare for my own approaching change ? In prosperity, health and ease, and life, to expect, and make provision for trouble, sickness, pain and death ? as every wise man in summer would do for winter ; and work with all my might, *while it is called to day* ; while the light continues, because the night of darkness is at hand, when none can work.



## S E C T. VIII.

*Of evils to be expected in this year ; the wisdom and mercy of God, in concealing from us the knowledge of future events.*

**N**OT only few and uncertain, but *evil* likewise *are the days of the years of my life*, may every one say, with the patriarch *Jacob*. A sufficient portion of *evil* for every year may well be expected, when our Lord tells us, there is a certain measure allotted for every day. *Sufficient to the day is the*

on TIME and ETERNITY. 35

*the evil of it.* Not only is our life short, but troublesome, full of vexatious mixtures. We cannot sing a *requiem* to our souls, when one great calamity is past; for we know not in this region of changes, but *another*, a *greater* may be at hand. One messenger of ill-news may succeed and out-do another, as it was with *Job*. We come weeping into the world in a most helpless, forlorn state; and if we escape the dangers of *infancy*, and the casualties of *childhood*; and after that outlive the snares and follies of *youth*, we are tost upon the pikes of *time* and *chance*, and sadden and disquiet ourselves with a thousand *griefs* and *sorrows* by inevitable and unexpected occasions; though we encrease the number of needless *cares* and *fears*, and *discontents*; till at length a sudden stroke arrests us, we fetch a groan, and die. †

Who can give a catalogue of the afflictions and calamities, perplexities and disappointments, incumbrances, crosses, and evil accidents of human life? By means whereof millions are disconsolate and sad, mourn and complain, weep and sigh, and from day to day are *fed with the bread of affliction, and the water of adversity*. Not to mention mens fluctuating restless thoughts of heart, importunate desires, baffled projects, defeated purposes, which suppose or bring vexation. A good share of these is not to be avoided; and yet very few can be particularly foreseen. Who could prognosticate a year ago the mercies, or the evils, which have happened since? public and private, personal



# 36 *Serious* REFLECTIONS

nal and relative, to the countries, cities, families and persons we are concerned for? And who can certainly foretel the events of this ensuing year? God hath intermixt good and evil in the life of man: He hath set *prosperity* against *adversity*, saith *Solomon* to the end, *that man should find nothing after him*, Eccles. vii. 14. that he may not know what shall come next, whether a prosperous or a calamitous event.

What a change may be made in a year by the mere casualty of human events; by the treachery of friends, or the malice of enemies, or the more immediate hand of God! We know *not what shall be on the morrow*, much less what a twelve month may produce. Because whatever may be disposed to happen, from natural causes or civil councils, may be altered by a particular decree of providence. \ Prepare me *Lord!* and every of those in whose felicity I more especially take part, for all the calamities and sorrows, thine infinite wisdom shall think fit to exercise us with, this following year; \ and by thy merciful providence, and gracious conduct, cause them to work for good: Furnishing us with suitable strength and wisdom, to acquiesce in thy good pleasure, and obey thy will. Let me follow thee, as the Father of the faithful, though I know not whither thou wilt lead me. \ Knowing the wisdom, and faithfulness of my pilot, let me therein be satisfied, though I know not particularly what course he will steer.

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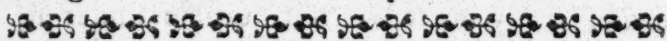
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## on TIME and ETERNITY. 37

I thank thee, *O heavenly Father!* that thou hast reserved the knowledge of future times and seasons to thy self, and *hid* events from men; lest by considering them *certain*, we should presume in case they are *good*; or should despairingly afflict our selves, by foreseeing the *evil* we know to be *inevitable*. Did we *certainly* foreknow the *good* that would befall us, we should not *trust* in thee to bring it to pass, or heartily implore thy care and conduct. Did we foresee the *evils* we shall suffer, before they overtake us, we should be overwhelmed with diffidence and *despair*. Many a *mother* who rejoyceth at the birth of a *son*, would mourn to foresee what a *man*, what a *son* he will prove. Such an *increase of knowledge* would *increase our sorrow*; such a prescience would transport and discompose us, by *unseasonable joys* and *sorrow*, born out of time; and weaken our dependance on thine own unerring wisdom, truth and power. —



### S E C T. IX.

*The supposition of dying this year, should be improved; the consequence of redeeming time, and providing for eternity farther prest. The folly of elder persons is condemned and check'd from the example of children. 'Tis advisable to familiarize the thoughts of death, and to imagine before-hand, what apprehensions of things we shall then have.*

THE longest life is but a *day* multiplied; and who can certify, or assure me, which will be my *last*? He only, who was God as well

D

well

### 38 *Serious* REFLECTIONS

well as man, could say, *Mine hour is not yet come.* Is all my life given me to resolve this question, *Whether I shall be in heaven or hell for ever?* And have I any time to lose, and squander away, as superfluous? Have I any more than needs? 'Tis no impossible, or unreasonable supposition to make, that *I may die this year.* Let me admit that thought, and imagine myself on a bed of sickness, wearied with pain, and ready to leave this world; the physicians gone, despairing of my recovery; my friends about me weeping; and all things in a doleful melancholy posture, suited to such a state; feeling within my self the presages of death, expecting the final stroke, in an hour or two more, what is *then* the value of sensual pleasures? Can I then relish or savour them? What *then* is honour to me, who shall never go abroad more to receive it, 'till carried to my grave? Will it *then* comfort me to have lived in reputation, and applause, if my heart was not humble under it, and the honour of God promoted by it? Can riches and a great estate support me, when I am just packing up, for a removal to the other world? In that hour will it be any satisfaction, to have made a stir and noise for a few years upon earth, to be talk'd of for a while longer than other men? Are these the things my dying thoughts will be most concerned to reflect on? †

These dignities, pleasures, and possessions offered to a dying man, would rather upbraid than tempt him; they come too late, as a prince's pardon to a man whose head is off.

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on TIME and ETERNITY. 39

*Die I must*, and appear before my judge to answer for all that I have received, and done in the body. *Fool* that I was, (shall I then too justly say to my self,) not to have considered this much sooner! not to have provided for it at a much better rate! my sins stare me in the face, my conscience tells me I am not ready for such a trial: I have lived a stranger to such thoughts as now I cannot refuse, and which should have been admitted sooner. / But if to such a state any hope of mercy may be granted, (tho' it be unspeakably little) yet I cannot promise my self any such warning by sickness. The *sleeping virgins* were called at *midnight*, and so may I. Where can I pitch my tents on earth, to be secure against a sudden remove?

Lord! make these thoughts effectual to prevent my loss of *precious time*, which at such a season, will be esteemed precious, tho' now it be not. O how *swift*, how short is my time of trial, in order to *eternity*! how difficult, how important a work is it to prepare for an *everlasting state*! What is all this world, how little, how meer a nothing, to a departing soul? And shall I, after such reflections, continue to pursue shadows, and please my self with empty dreams? when being so near my final judgment, the common wisdom of a man requires me to mind it in good earnest; and be more solicitous about it than for any thing temporal? O in what manner will *death* open my eyes, by shutting the windows of sense! How shall I then see the nothingness of what is but *temporal*, and the reality of what is *eternal*?



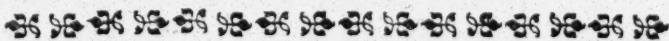
40 *Serious* REFLECTIONS

We sometimes laugh to see the vanity of *little Children*, who are greatly pleased with painted toys, and busily employed about trifles. It extorts a smile to see them eager and industrious, and mightily concerned in their childish sports; to see them sigh or weep for little things which we despise; to observe with what sollicitude and care they'll raise a little fabrick, which three moments after they themselves pull down, or would otherwise tumble of its own accord. We laugh at these, but should weep over ourselves, as the *greater and Elder fools*; who are every whit as silly, yea, infinitely more; that considering we know the frailty of our present life, and can look beyond the grave to another world, should yet, mispend our precious time on things which cannot profit; and please ourselves with what is so unsuitable to our age and state; and suffer our passions to work with violence, for a thing of nought: and our greatest diligence, care, and zeal, to be exercised on things impertinent and vain; that are perishing in themselves and can contribute nothing to our eternal welfare? And is it not thus, with reference to all that men toil and labour for, with the neglect of an immortal state?

The voluptuous *Sadducee* will not refuse the present gratification of his sensual appetite, because he is uncertain of another day. *Let us eat and drink, for to morrow we die.* Should not the same motive quicken my diligence in a better work? and because my Lord may *come suddenly as a thief in the night*, immediately prepare to meet him? Let me now therefore,

## on TIME and ETERNITY. 41

O my soul! look forward to the end of life and time! and so let me esteem, and seek, and choose and do every thing in the first Place, which then I shall wish I had. Let me do nothing now which I verily believe I shall then be ashamed, or sorry to reflect on; that by thinking what a condition I shall then wish to have my soul in, I may now provide my self much better than I have done hitherto. That while I am in the greatest probability of living, I may suppose my change to be near, and so not dare to do any thing, but what I would or might do, if I were in the present expectation of death. To this end, let me go down to the *pottery-house*, descend to the consideration of my *mortality*, and dwell among the tombs; remembering the *Ægyptians* built themselves better tombs than houses, because they were to dwell longer in them. Let every night's repose, serve me as a memorial of my *last sleep*! and let my bed stand for the model of my *coffin*! This is the only way, to be dead to this world; to be able to judge of things now, as we shall do after death, according to immutable, eternal truth.



### S E C T. X.

*The brevity of life considered as the fruit of sin.*

*There are but three ways of leaving this world, as Abel, Adam, Enoch. A diligent improvement of time farther press'd; and the neglect of it bewailed.*

**T**HE shortning of our days is the fruit of sin: All the *funerals* that have ever been

## 42 *Serious* REFLECTIONS

in the world, have been caused by sin. We die because we have sinned, and yet we should not sin as now, if this were not forgot, that we *must* die. From the first transgression of *Adam* we derive our death; and therefore some of his posterity lived longer than he. Which proves that the lengthning of our days is a peculiar *gift* of God; and yet 'tis such a gift as was more desired formerly, than since the appearance of Christ: For we read of none in the new testament, since *life and immortality is brought to light by the gospel*, who desired a long continuance here on earth. ✕

Were we delivered from *sin*, the sting of death, by having made our peace with God in the blood of Jesus, death would not be frightful, or put on such a ghastly vizard, as to most it doth. But we are uncertain of our *justification*, we waver between hopes and fears, as to our final sentence; and are conscious to ourselves, that we are *not ready* for our great account. This makes death so terrible. ✕ Considering withal that it is inevitable; *the way of living*. For tho' the curse be removed, and the sting be taken out by our blessed *Saviour*; so that the *souls* of believers are safe, and shall not be touch'd by the *second* death; yet God hath not taken away the stroke of it from the body. Tho' a christian is assured of deliverance from *hell*, he is not exempted from the *grave*, as his passage to *heaven*.

Prepare me, *Lord*, by the free remission of all my sins, and make me meet for the blessed inheritance, by sanctifying grace; and then

## on TIME and ETERNITY. 43

then thy time is best: *Thy holy will be done*: No matter then, whether my death be *violent*, or what we call *natural*. It will be one of the *two*, for I can't expect to be *translated* by a miraculous change, as holy *Enoch* was; and as they shall be, who shall be found alive in the world, when our glorious judge shall come again. There are but those *three ways* of leaving earth; and the *three first men*, of whose departure we read in scripture, are instances of all three. *Abel* of a *violent death*, *Adam* of a *natural one*, and *Enoch* translated. ✕ The variety and order of their departure, as one observes, is very admirable, and deserves, to be considered. For all mankind must follow one or other of those *three* examples. Every man or woman, that is born into the world, must leave it by one of these *three ways*; either be cut off by a *violent death*, as *Abel* the first man who died; or die a *natural death*, as *Adam* did, who was the *second*; or be *translated*, as *Enoch*, who was the *third* we read of. —

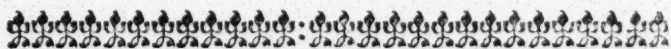
But though I know, that within a few years at farthest, I must leave this world by one or other of these ways; though I have been dying ever since I began to live; am dead to the last year, and to all the preceeding portions of my time; and know withal, that what remains will quickly pass and begone after the same manner; yet how have I over-loved this body, as if I should never live out of it! and set my heart and affections on this world, as if I should never remove to another! and trifle away my precious time and life, as if a change would never come! —

That



## 44 *Serious* REFLECTIONS

That *few* do seriously admit such thoughts is too evident, by the general course and practice of their lives. For to what hazards do men expose themselves? What pains will they take? What inconveniences will they bear? With what unwearied industry will they toyl and labour, to get a little money or honour in this world, tho' they know not but they may be called out of it, before the end of *this* year? And yet the same persons are remiss and slothful about a future life, negligent and unconcerned about an eternal state; careless and indifferent, yea, sottishly stupid about the welfare of their immortal souls. Henceforward, O my soul! Whatever others do, let me resolve to live in the expectation of a *change*, which I know is *certain*, and may be very *near*. —



### S E C T. XI.

*Of the expectation of another life. The vanity and misery of man in his best estate, if there be none. The satisfactory removal of that supposition, by the thoughts of God, and of eternal felicity, in his blessed presence.*

**L**ET me retire a little, O my Soul! and bethink my self, what a world this is; what men design and seek, and do and suffer; with what false and feigned joys they are pleased, being only happy by comparison; and  
with

on TIME and ETERNITY. 45

with what real sorrows they are afflicted ; what innumerable disappointments, sicknesses, (and as troublesome remedies,) dangers, labours, pains, and calamities of all sorts, multitudes groan under, and loudly complain of ? And what little unworthy ends are pursued by all that do not seriously seek eternal rest ? And how often frustraed ? And withal consider the cares that disquiet us, the errors that deceive us, the many temptations that assault and overcome us ; how busy we are about vanities ; how often dejected, and melancholly for the breaking of a bubble ; how eager and industrious to pursue a shadow ; active and in earnest to destroy ourselves, and one another ; and then reflect on the malice and cruelty, the filthiness and impiety, and great corruption, which abounds every where ; whereby God is dishonoured, and provok'd to anger ! After this, what a theatre of *tragedies* must this world appear, What an *hospital* of sick and diseased, or rather distracted Persons ! How should I be tempted to say, *Lord ! why hast thou made all men in vain ?* In vain indeed, if I could not look from this sea of troubles, to the haven of rest ; from this dark prison, to the region of light ; from this deceitful, troublesome, and defiling *earth*, to a blessed, everlasting *heaven* ; for *verily*, if there be no world but this, *every man in his best estate in this world is altogether vanity, Selah.* Psal. 39. 5. 'Tis a certain undoubted truth, the perfix'd *verily* tells us so ; and that it deserves to be well considered, we learn from the concluding *Selah, every man is vanity.* Not the

## 46 *Serious* REFLECTIONS

the inferior parts of the creation only ; but *man* the lord of all and *every man*, every *Adam* from himself, to the last man that shall by ordinary generation descend from him. Not the ignorant, poor, or wicked only, but *all* the individuals of this species. Young or old, strong or weak, beautiful or deformed, rich or poor, high or low, good or bad, (in respect of the body, and this present life) every one is *vanity*; and this is true, suppose him in his *best estate*; not only in helpless infancy and childhood, or in decrepit old age ; not only in pain and poverty, and disgrace ; but in his most settled, most flourishing, most envied and admired condition upon earth ; in the midst of strength and wit, and honour ; when at *best*, as to body, and mind, and outward circumstances ; when he looks fairest ; when he shines brightest ; in the height of all his glory, with the greatest likelihood of a continuance ; yet *then* he is but *vanity*, in his frame, in his temper, constitution, inclinations, actions, and employment ; he is a meer *shadow*, an empty, mutable, inconsiderable thing, and not to be accounted of. His heart, his head, his imaginations, reasonings, desires, purposes, projects, hopes and fears, are all *vanity* ; and altogether *vanity*, in all the parts and kinds, and particulars of it. He not only *may be*, but *he is so*, in his *best estate* ; if this world be his *best*, if this be our *all*, and nothing more to be expected after death.

And

## on TIME and ETERNITY. 47

And how should such a reflection strike me to the heart, to suppose that after a few years are ended, I must return to my first nothing, and my very being be (\*) swallowed up of eternal death! What satisfaction can I then take in any present enjoyments, if an eternal annihilation be at hand, when I must bid *adieu* for ever to all that I now possess? What delight can I have in the ordinary comforts of life, with this belief, that within a year or two, it may be to morrow, I shall sink into the dust, and exist no more? What pleasure in any thing with this dismal expectation? The more flourishing my condition is in this world, the more should I dread to lose it, if nothing better, nothing at all, can be enjoyed after death. Some philosophers have ignorantly urged such a consideration as an *antidote* against the fear of death; but the admission of it may rather deprive a man of all the comfort of life. What then is the advantage of a wise man above a fool? The exercise and improvement of our noblest faculties would render us more miserable than others, if nothing be expected, and certain, when this life is over. Not only sensual, but intellectual pleasures would be disturbed and destroyed by such thoughts; that very shortly, the next year, or day, I must disappear; and all my enjoyments and hopes be utterly and for ever lost, with my very being.

Were the case thus, (which such consequences evince it is not), it were better for most men they had never been born; whether

(\*) Vid. Mr. How's *Vanity of Man as Mortal*.



ther their condition here be prosperous, or afflicted. For what comfort or quiet can any man have in plenty and *prosperity*, when this frightful apprehension of an approaching end is ever present? And what consolation can it yield a man, who is afflicted and *calamitous*, and yet loves his *life* above all things; to think that he shall not cease to be *miserable*, but by *ceasing to be*? And what is become of all religion, if such a thought be entertained? All devotion to God is thereby extinguished, all the restraints of vice removed, the flood-gates of impiety opened; the encouragements of virtue, the rewards of holiness, the foundation of tribulation, and suffering for righteousness sake, all at once taken away. *Lord!* confirm my belief of the invisible future state of rewards and punishments! and let not *saducism* and *infidelity* damp my zeal in thy service, or rob me of the comforts of *this life*, which if I had any solid ones must suppose the hopes of a *better*.

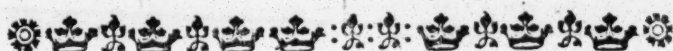
Let others therefore, *O my soul!* who expect not an everlasting heaven beyond the grave, place their affections on earthly things, and mind this world, as if there were no better, no other. Let them who doubt or disbelieve the promised reward of *eternity*, take up with what they must shortly leave, and labour for the bread that perisheth. But since I profess to believe and seek the *life everlasting*; let me daily entertain myself with the hopes of it. And let all the flattering dreams of what is desirable upon earth, give place to nobler and better thoughts. Let me derive my principal joy  
from

## on TIME and ETERNITY. 49

from the promise and expectation of that future felicity, and endeavour nothing more than a meetness to partake of it. ( *O my God, my God !* thou art my *life*, and *joy*, and *portion* ; in thee, and in thy love, all my desires and hopes are answered, and all my wants supplied. However *evil* this world is made by sin, yet thou art the infinite and supreme *good*. How mutable, how uncertain, how perishing soever are all sublunary things ; yet thou art the rock of ages, the fountain of everlasting life, and hast appointed another world, and another life, when this is ended, wherein thou wilt be better known, and loved, and served, and honoured, and communicate thy self more abundantly than now, to those, the desire of whose souls is towards thee, that believe and love thee, that partake of thine image, and are devoted to thy fear. The assurance of *this* and nothing else, will answer the objection, of the present *vanity* and *miser*y we are subject to. —

E

S E C T.



## S E C T. XII.

*The consideration of the death of others, especially of relations, friends, and acquaintance, how to be improved. What instructions we may learn by the sight of a dead carcass, or a death's head, and the usual Motto on it: And what by the death of holy persons, to quicken our desires to be as they.*

**H**ATH divine patience added *one year* more to the number of my days, when so many others were removed by death the *last year*? Others, whom a few months since I knew in vigorous health! wiser, stronger, more likely to live, and to answer the ends of life, than me; some of them my near relations, and useful friends, in whose conversation I took delight, and promised myself advantage by their company, and examples; but they are taken and I am left. *Thy holy will, O Lord! is done*: And they who were prepared, are infinite gainers by this my loss. Quicken my preparations, by following their piety, to meet them in thy heavenly kingdom. Let thy long suffering lead me to repentance; and suffer me not to slight thy warning, by the *death of others*, to expect my own. *Lord!* cure my earthly-mindedness, and practical unbelief; and by all such admonitions of th  
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on TIME and ETERNITY. 51

providence, teach me to possess, and use this world, as knowing I must shortly leave it; and let not the thoughts of my mortality wear off, as soon as the funeral of my friends is over.

Every year some or other of our *acquaintance* drop into the grave, we attend them thither, and lament, it may be, for a few days, their departure and removal; but consider not, that others will e're it be long do the same for us; it may be before *this year* is ended. Oh! how soon do we forget our deceased friends, and *ourselves*, who are likewise dying! and count upon a long life, which we cannot reasonably expect; and hug the enjoyments of this transitory world, as if our present state would for ever! Will nothing but our own dissolution, effectually convince us of our mistake, and folly, in this particular? —

Though the arrows of death fly continually round about us; sometimes over our *heads*, when superiors are taken away; sometimes fall at our *feet*, when children and servants, and inferiors die; sometimes on our *left hand*, when an enemy is cut off, and while I am pleased with that, in that very hour, it may be, another arrow on our *right hand* strikes the friend of our bosom and delight. And can we see all this, that great and small, high and low, friends and foes, are all vanity, and drop down dead round about us, and shall we not consider, that *we* are as *vain* as *they*, and must shortly follow? shall we not by a christian *chymistry*, extract spirits out of these dead bones? and by these examples learn *the end of all men*, and lay it to heart?



Whenever I see the *funeral* of another, let me think thus with myself ; why might not I have been that man or woman, that is now carried to the grave ? if we had been compared a few days since, it is probable I should have been thought as likely to have been his *monitor*, by dying first, as he mine. By such an improvement of these warnings, the request of the rich man to *Abraham* was in great measure granted ; for it is a call from the dead that speaks loudly to consider ourselves, and prepare in time for so great a change : and say, as the prophet to *Hezekiah*, *set thine house in order, for thou shalt die.* ✕

Can we look upon a *death's head*, and not remember what we shall shortly be ? May not much be learned from it's common motto ? *Sum quod eris, fueramque quod es.* *I am that which thou shalt shortly be, and have been that which thou art now :* That is, I have been as gay and jocund, as brisk and merry, as proud and vain, as rich and great, as careless and secure, as honourable and as much esteemed, as beautiful, and as well beloved, as witty and as learned, as *thou art* or canst be *now.* I valued myself as much upon my estate, and trade, and health, and beauty, upon my education, profession, employments, parts, friends, family ; &c. as *thou* hast ever done, or canst do : I lived in ease and pleasure, in mirth and jollity ; I minded the world as much, and indulged myself as much in sensuality, and was as careful of my body, pampered and pleased my flesh, as much as *thou* ; and thought as little of a sudden death, and prepared as little for

on TIME and ETERNITY. 53

for such a change, *as thou dost*: But now my dry bones are looked upon with contempt and scorn, but thou shalt shortly return to dust, and be vile as I am.

It cannot but affect us, did we consider it, to see divers snatched away in their *youth*, and outward *prosperity*; and in the midst of their *sin* and *folly*, without any visible signs of true *repentance*: Or in terrible anguish and horror for their past crimes: And yet how few do take the warning, carefully to prevent the like unhappiness! O Lord, preserve those strong *convictions*, those serious *thoughts*, those holy *resolutions*, those lively *apprehensions* of the life to come, of the evil of sin, and the terrors of thy wrath, which the sight of dying persons hath at any time awakened in my soul! O the *eloquence* of a *dying sinner*, to persuade to *repentance*! Even when he hath lost his *speech*, and lies gasping, and trembling, on a bed of sickness; breathing out his last faint breath, and passing into the other world, to answer for the crimes and follies of a wicked life: Lord! Revive these thoughts upon my soul, and let me feel the power and influence of them, in the hour of *temptation*, and in every time of need; and let the consideration of the *death of believers*, the *blestness* they are thereby entered into, and the *happiness* they are thereby possessed of, quicken my desires and diligence to prepare to follow. When I think where they are, and what they are a doing, what is their work and what their state, what their continual employment, and what their enjoyments, and how different from ours;

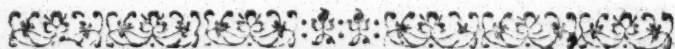
## 54 *Serious* REFLECTIONS

I cannot but wish to be with them, to be as they are, and do as they do; to know and love, and praise God *as they*. They are not hindered by such a clog as *this body* is to us; or tempted by their senses, appetite and fancy, to sin against him: They complain not of a seducing flesh, unruly passions, low and disordered thoughts; of temporal afflictions, spiritual desertions, the snares of the world, and the malice and subtilty of the devil: *We*, who are *pilgrims* and *travellers*, are exposed to these difficulties and storms which *they* are freed from. They are now rejoicing in the light of God's countenance, and shall never question his love more, while we are in tears and sorrows, groaning to be delivered.

But think, *O my soul!* That *They were* lately such as *We are now*. They were members of the militant church, before they entered into joy and triumph. They had their conflict and difficulties, their hour of temptation, and time of tryal, as we have *ours*. They were slandered, and persecuted, and sadned, and disappointed as their followers are. They went to heaven the same way, and got the victory after the same manner, by repentance and faith, and humble persevering obedience. They were once imperfect as we are now; and complained of the body of sin and death, and strugglings of unmortified lust, as we do: And were sometimes in the dark about their interest in the promise, and walked heavily by the hiding of God's face, and endured temptation, *even as we*. And as we have nothing to do, or suffer, but what they met with,

## on TIME and ETERNITY. 55

with, we have the same encouragement that administered to their support ; the same God and Saviour, the same way and rule, the same assistance, by the aids of his holy spirit, offered to us ; the same promises, and the same rewards proposed, which they enjoyed, first in faith and hope, and afterwards in fruition. Yea, they passed through the dark valley, and so must we : Their earthly tabernacle was dissolved, and so must ours be. We must expect to go the *same way* to rest and glory, and wait God's time for our admission. We must finish first the work which God hath for us to do and suffer, and then all tears shall be wiped from our eyes ; we shall *grieve no more*, we shall *sin no more*, but be as the angels in heaven, or as the spirits of the just made perfect. —



### S E C T. XIII.

*What influence the consideration of eternity would have upon our hearts and lives, if soundly believed and considered ; especially, if the supposition of dying this year be annexed to it.*

**W**ITH what humility, mortification, and self-denial ; with what seriousness, watchfulness, and resolved constancy, would every christian live on earth, did he act always under the influence and power of a confirmed faith,



## 56      *Serious* REFLECTIONS

faith, concerning the life to come? We should not then grudge a little labour, or boggle at a few difficulties in our way. What though I meet with injuries and affronts, hardships and inconveniencies, being now in a *foreign country*, and every day I live, one day's journey nearer my eternal home! Shall I not patiently bear momentary sorrows, while I believe I am hastening to *eternal joy*? Did I look more to the *everlasting world*, should not I make the pleasing of God, in order to my eternal welfare, the great business of my life? Should I not serve the Lord with more fervency of spirit, and be better fortified against the fears of man, who can but hurt and kill the *body*, nor *that* neither, without the permission of God? Should I not order all my affairs, answer all temptations, mortify inward lusts, live in the exercise of grace, and in circumspect persevering obedience, in order to it? Should I not watch more over my heart, and lips, and ways, be more diligent to trim my lamp, more crucified to this world, more careful to call myself frequently to an account, and renew my repentance? Would not my conversation be more useful and edifying, my discourses more savory and full of religion, my prayers to God more humble and earnest, my charity to men more unfeigned and extensive, and my preparations every way more suitable to such a *faith* and to such apprehensions of *an everlasting state*? Could we carry the thoughts of *eternity* about with us every day, and often admit them in our civil and secular affairs; did we repeat it frequently

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## on TIME and ETERNITY. 57

to ourselves, at least *every morning*, as soon as we are awake, that we are near *eternity*; this grain of incense would perfume the whole temple, and be an antidote against inward lust, and impure thoughts, against the infection and defilement of bad company, and the *snarcs* of worldly business, and do much to prevent vain and sensual actions, and to cure vain affections.

Did we *believe it*, and believe it *near*, should we not take as much pains to secure eternal life, as we see men do to get riches? Should we not use the same diligence, care, and circumspection, the same prudent foresight, watchfulness, and perseverance, to prevent everlasting destruction, as others do to provide against poverty, and to live in plenty a little while on earth? Should we not rejoice as much in the promise and hopes of it, as others do in the prospect and expectation of some earthly advantage? Lord! I confess and bewail the weakness of my faith. How often have I concluded, and said, that *heaven alone* is the the place of *happiness*, and yet my carnal heart is too much affected with earthly things! how often have I resolved, (*upon the conviction of the certainty of the eternal world,*) to mind *this* less, and to affect and seek it no more as I have done! and yet my foolish heart is hankering after it still. O crucify my affections to things below! and let the believing thoughts of the *next life*, render me victorious over all the temptations of *this*. Pardon and cure the staggering trembling thoughts of an unbelieving heart, by greater measures of

## 58 *Serious* REFLECTIONS

of a lively *faith*. That my desires may be strong and urgent, and my diligence and steadfastness in the way of truth, be some way correspondent to this important article. † Let me live only for *eternity*, hope for nothing but *eternity*, design and intend nothing as my chief end, but *eternity*, and seek and mind nothing in comparison with *eternity* ! Did we believe it, how would every thing in this world be looked upon as eligible, or fit to be refused, as it is like to be an *help*, or an *hindrance*, with reference to *eternity* ! we should then endeavour to do nothing unbecoming such an expectation. Consider this world as our *passage*, and the invisible future world as our *abiding country*, where we are to dwell *for ever* ; whatever we meet with *here*, whether sweet or bitter, easy or troublesome, pleasing or ungrateful, we should not much matter, but as it relates to *hereafter*.

And were I *certain* I should have no longer time of trial in order to this eternal state, than *this one year*, which is now begun : If a messenger from God should convincingly assure me of it ; what would I not do to prepare for *death*, and secure the interests of *eternity* ? With what *remorse* and deep *repentance* should I reflect on the *follies* of my past life ? With what importunate cries should I beg *forgiveness* ? How *patiently* should I bear *calamity*, for so short a time ? How little should I value the favours or frowns of men ; How circumspect to improve every *season* of doing and receiving good ? How careful to avoid *temptation*, and how resolute in resisting it ? Did

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## on TIME and ETERNITY. 59

I verily believe I had no longer time to live on earth, than *this one year* at most ; how insipid would be the offer of carnal mirth, vain pastime, sensual diversions, idle company, &c ? How should I value every hour, every inch of my little *time*, under the apprehension that *eternity is at hand* ? O my soul ! shall I make no provision against the possibility of such a case ? Is not my change as certain as if it were this year, as if it were to morrow ? though I am not certain it is so near, nor certain but it may be. Let me then *seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness* : Let me fix it well, and make it clear, that I have secured my *great concern*, and am ready for a sudden summons. —



### S E C T. XIV.

*How a good man may improve and encourage himself, under the supposition of dying this year, even in the most uneasy and undesirable circumstances.*

**I** *May die this year* ; then all my cares and fears, if I am *rich*, all my sorrow and calamities (as to this world) if I am *poor*, will die too. *I may die this year* ; then I shall have no more enemies, no more sickness, and which is infinitely better, I shall *sin* no more. I *must* shortly *die* ; it may be, *this year* ; but there is no other to come to a blessed life, but



60      *Serious* REFLECTIONS

but by dying ; and my Saviour hath died for me, and he that believes in him shall never see death. He lives who was once dead, yea he lives for evermore ; and hath promised, that I shall be with him to behold his glory. He hath the keys of death and hell : He is the resurrection and the life ; he hath removed the sting of death ; and I need not fear a conquered enemy. *If I die this year*, I must quit the company of all my dear *friends* on earth, but I shall go to *better company* above ; and if they are friends of my Christ, we shall shortly *meet* again, and love one another in a better manner than now, and never more be parted.

*I may die this year* ; my *friends* and *enemies* may die too. Let me enjoy the *one* as mortal dying persons, that must e're long leave me, or I them ; and not fear the *other*, who may so soon perish, and quickly be incapable of doing me or others mischief. ✕

*I may die this year* ; Let me not then think much of *temporal sufferings*, of any evils which may so soon be over. Oh ! what would condemned sinners in the other world give, to be able to believe, and say so of their sufferings ? —

*I may die this year* ; and can I wonder that I am sometime *sick* and in *pain*, and that my *body* is out of order ? Am I not mortal, and dwell in a house of clay, which must shortly moulder into dust ; and is it any thing strange, that such a *crazy building* doth sometimes shake, and need repair, and threaten a dissolution ? It is a greater wonder I am any  
time

## on TIME and ETERNITY. 61

time well: That such a body, compounded of so many little parts, and so easily disordered by innumerable accidents, should be in health, is hardly less to be admired, than that an instrument of a thousand strings should be kept in tune.

I thank thee, *O heavenly father*, for the many advantages of *sickness*, to weaken the power of *sin*, to humble my *pride*, and cure my worldliness and sensuality, to reduce me from wandering, to empty me of self-conceit, to awaken the consideration of death and judgment, to impress the thoughts of the vanity of this world, and the eternity of the next; to assist me to mortify the flesh, to rule my passions, to exercise patience, and quicken me in prayer, and try my faith and love, and excite my diligence to redeem time, and convince me of the worth and uncertainty of it; and thereby promote my preparations for my final change. The great apostle by *dying daily*, had as many victories over this world as he lived days. Oh! that I might so far walk by the same rule, as *every day* to think of providing for my *last*; and in health to do that which in sickness I shall wish I had done!

*I may may die this year*; it may be, by some tedious painful sickness, some troublesome and loathsome disease. But God hath promised his grace shall be sufficient; he will make my bed in my sickness, and put under his everlasting Arms for my support, and not suffer me to be tempted above what I am able, he will encrease my patience, and carry me through the pangs of death, and the dark

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## 62 *Serious* REFLECTIONS

*Valley ; and when heart and flesh fail, be the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.*

*I may die this year ;* What if I should be by an hand of *violence* ; if for righteousness sake, in defence of the truth, for a good cause, and a good conscience, and my peace be made with God, and I am accused for doing well, or innocent of the evil which is laid to my charge ; there is ground enough for encouragement and support. Thousands of my *bettors* have met with the like, whose names are precious and renowned. \ Innumerable *christians* have died by the sentence of a *judge*, with more cheerfulness and joy than *others*, or, it may be, than they *themselves* would have done, by the sentence of the *physician*. \ The torture or many diseases is unspeakably more formidable, as to the meer pain ; and for all else, the righteous Lord, who loveth righteousness, will clear my integrity, if it may best subserve his own great and holy ends : At least, he will stand by and help me, when all forsake me ; and if he speak *peace*, and give *inward consolation*, who can speak *trouble* ? And his final judgment, which is near at hand, will distribute rewards and punishments to all, according to their works.

Suppose farther, that I should want a *sepulchre* after death. There is nothing I could better be without. If God receive my *soul*, and will raise my *body* at the last day, whether it putrifie and consume under ground, or above it, is no great matter. They who are alive will be more concerned in that, than I shall be : Graves are for the sake of the *living* rather

## on TIME and ETERNITY. 63

ther than the dead. The sun, the rain, the air, birds, beasts, and worms, will all contribute to give me *burial*, if men deny it. The only deference is, that it will be a little longer e're I am buried. If my soul rest in the bosom of my Saviour, and by persevering in the love and practice of the truth, I have secured my reputation with wise and good men, I need not be solicitous what becomes of my body. My Almighty Judge will raise me a *glorious body*, like his own, and reunite it to my soul, as easily, and as certainly, as any of those, whose bodies were preserved in caves and vaults, in proud sepulchres, and under stately monuments.

*I may die this year*; and shall not then have the satisfaction to see my *children* or nearest *kindred* educated and provided for, settled and disposed of. But is not the *ever-living God* the same? Cannot he *as well* take care of them when I am gone, as now? answer all my prayers after my decease? and exercise that fatherly care, wisdom and love, which shall dispose of their conditions? save them from temptations, and supply all their wants, and exceed all my desires, in reference to them? and fulfil his covenant-promise from generation to generation, to the childrens children of them that fear him? O how *weak* is my *faith*, that cannot trust God in so common and plain a case!

Lastly, *I may die this year*; and not live to see the ruin of the *antichristian kingdom*, and interest, and the accomplishment of many excellent promises, which concern the rest,



## 64      *Serious* REFLECTIONS

and peace, and purity, and glory of the churches of Christ on earth, in the latter days. \ But have I not deserved, by my provoking unbelief, ingratitude, and disobedience, to die in the wilderness, and not behold the promised land, or see the peace of *Jerusalem*? And will not the strugglings of satan to support *Babylon*, infer a dismal night of darkness and distress, before the expected morning of deliverance? So that it may now, if ever, be truly said, *Henceforth, blessed are the dead who die in the Lord.* \ And if God will take me to himself in the other world, I cannot possibly be a loser; tho' I should not see the beginnings of *a new heaven and a new earth*, in this. \ However I rejoyce in *hope*, and pray incessantly for the resurrection of the *witnesses*, and the rebuilding *Sion*, and the more plentiful effusion of the *Holy-spirit* (the great comprehensive promise of the latter times) to effect a glorious *kingdom* for *Christ* on earth: And my faith assures me, I shall hereafter see the *son of God* revealed from heaven, cloathed with majesty, sitting on a cloud, leading the heavenly host, raising the dead by his powerful voice, summoning all the world to appear to judgment, gathering his elect, and finally destroying death, and him that had the power of it, the devil, condemning the wicked to everlasting destruction, but acquitting, honouring and rewarding his poor members with infinite and eternal blessedness.



S E C T. XV.

*Of dying in a foreign country, and of dying young. Considerations proper to reconcile the mind to both.*

I May not live to the end of this year: God in his providence having called me abroad, I may never see my *native country* more. Let me still remember, O my soul! that wherever I am, I am travelling towards the grave, and passing to another world: That I may live in all places, as a *pilgrim* and *stranger* here on earth; with affections suited to my condition, becoming one who is travelling in a strange land. Let me bear the inconveniences I may meet with in this world, as strangers in their travels are wont to do. Let me not repine at the ill accommodations of an *inn*, where I am to lodge but a night or two; but encourage myself with the assurance of better entertainment at home, when my pilgrimage is ended, and my journey is over.

One of my dearest *holy friends*, and *fellow travellers*, (whose memory will be ever precious (g) with those who knew him) quickly arrived to his journey's end, and is entered into rest betimes. Which of his companions shall next follow, we know not, or how soon.

(g) *Mr. Thomas Bent, who dy'd at Geneva. May 10. 1683.*

## 66 *Serious* REFLECTIONS

Lord! make me apprehend the nearness of my change in every place; and if I am prepared for dying, no matter *where* it be. There is no one country farther from the presence of God than another. The whole world may be considered as one great house, and the several kingdoms and countries of it, but as different *apartments* in the same house; and they who tarry at home, are no more exempt from *death* than they who travel abroad.

*The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof*; I can go no where to be out of his territories, I shall still tread upon my father's ground. I had rather be an *Israelite* in a wilderness with the presence of God, than a courtier in idolatrous *Egypt*. Abraham, the father of the faithful, and the friend of God, was banished from his own country; and should I never set foot again on my native soil, there is no reason of murmuring against my God, who hath dealt thus with many of his favourites. And while I have been in a strange land, he hath not suffered me to feel the wants and necessities, and *heart of a stranger*. Among a people of a strange language he can, and doth provide for me all things richly to enjoy. I may set up my *Ebenezer*, hitherto hath God supplied all my wants.

The presence of my gracious father is every where the *same*; in some measure, *blessed be my God*, I have hitherto found it so. X And may I not rejoyce in God in a desert, though all the world should forsake me; though all the world should be against me? Should I

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## on TIME and ETERNITY. 67

have no other friend or helper ; is not God an infinite God *enough* ? and without his favour and presence, what can all this world do for me ? If I am *sick*, and in danger of death, among my *relations* and *friends* ; if the *comforts of the Almighty* do not refresh and delight my soul, *they* cannot : And if I want not *these* in my last agonies, no matter in what part or corner of the earth I breathe my last. If the word and promise of God be my Foundation, an holy hope my anchor, Christ my pilot, and heaven my country, I shall not fail of being landed there at last. Suffer me not to forsake thee, *O heavenly father* ! while I live ; and do not thou forsake me in my *last hour* ; and let it come *when* and *where* thou wilt. If my blessed Saviour will receive my departing Soul at death, I am not solicitous in what country or part of the earth it be. —

And that I may not be unwilling in the flower of my age and time, *in youth and strength*, to leave this world ; let me think often, that no one age or part of life is more privileged against the stroke of death than another. If I have done my work betimes, as my deceased *fellow traveller* had, is it not better to receive the blessed recompence, than to tarry longer in a world of sin and suffering, absent from the Lord ? Shall I not thereby escape a multitude of temptations, sins, and sorrows, which others by living longer are exposed to ? If my peace be made with God, what should make me willing to live at this distance from him ? What should render this world so desirable, where God is so dishonoured, where I

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## 68 *Serious* REFLECTIONS

am so often tempted to displease him, and so often yield to such temptations? And may I not fear lest I should fall into such scandalous and grievous sins, that may bring a publick reproach on the gospel of Christ, and sadden the hearts of all my acquaintance, who love the Lord Jesus in sincerity? By dying early I shall contract less guilt, and commit less sin, and see and feel less *sorrow* than others who live longer. And tho' I should maintain my integrity, yet in this world my highest love and obedience to God, and my sweetest communion with him, is but imperfect. How many impediments and diversions do I daily meet, that deaden my heart to heavenly contemplations and affections what disappointments and sorrowful disasters, to convince me that *this* is not the place of rest and happiness? What smart afflictions may some of my *relations* prove? What dangerous snares may attend me in the remaining portion of my time? What opposition and hatred from men may the steadfast professing of the truth and fidelity to God expose me to? What publick national calamities may I have my share in, &c.

But if I consider *old age* itself, which we do desire to reach; what and how many are the infirmities and griefs, and troublesome circumstances which attend that state, which dying young will prevent? Are not most men, who reach a very great old age, helpless objects of pity? A burthen to themselves, and to all about them? And (which commonly happens) may I not then be as unwilling to die, as at present? As loth *then* to leave the world



S E C T. XVI.

*The contemplation of our approaching change may assist us to mortify the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eyes, and the pride of life; to cure ambition, and promote contentment.*

ALL that is in the world, saith the Apostle, is *the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.* The dust and ashes of our own mortality duly considered and applied, will help to deaden and extinguish each of these. By *pride of life* we lift up ourselves against heaven, and despise our maker; by *the lust of the flesh* we overlove and indulge the body, and study to gratify the sensual appetite. By *the lust of the eyes* our desires are immoderate after temporal and external goods. The thought of our approaching end hath a tendency to oppose and mortify *these lusts*; to humble us before God? to take us off from the inordinate love of the body; and to moderate our passion to earthly things. It may help us against *pride*, by shewing us the infinite distance between the eternal self-sufficient God, and such poor dust as we; who are but of yesterday, and, if he uphold us not, and maintain our souls in life, shall be laid in the dust to morrow: It will mind us of his justice against *sin*, the parent of *death*, and of all the miseries of our mortal state; and

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world as *now*, tho' in a manner it will have left me; For how many old men, past the relish of sensual pleasures, are inordinately fond of longer life!

Have I not been told by *heathens*, as well as *christians*, that 'tis not the length of time, but its improvement, that doth really make a *long life*? If I have answered the end for which I was born, 'tis not *too soon to die*. No man ever miscarried as to his everlasting interest, because his *life* was *short*, but *evil*. He that is prepared for death, he that dies *in the Lord*, hath lived long enough, and should thank God for a *speedy* call to the possession of that *felicity*, which the holiest saints on earth desire and breathe after. *Gideon* lost nothing by returning from victory, *while the sun was yet high*. He hath fought long enough who hath gained the victory. If I have wrought but a few hours in a vineyard, and done but little service for my Lord and Master; and yet am dismiss'd, and rewarded, before the rest of my fellow-labourers, shall I repine, and think my Lord doth not befriend me? If he hath any farther service for me, he will prolong my days, and make me diligent, I hope, and *contented*. | Otherwise I pray he would make me ready to die, and make me *willing* and *desirous* to depart this life. For to be only *content* to die, that I may be perfectly holy, and fully blessed, is methinks too low for a christian, who acts like himself; believing the certainty of his avowed principles and hopes, and knowing, that *While we are present in the body, we are absent from the Lord*.—

S E C T.

## on TIME and ETERNITY. 71

convince us of our weakness to resist his will, or avoid his wrath. † As to our *fond affection* to the body, it may instruct us, that it deserves not to be accounted so much of; it will open our eyes, to discern the preference of our immortal souls, and what concerns them, to the interest of a perishing body. † It may convince us, that we are *cruel* and unkind to our very *bodies*, by overloving them, because we thereby contribute to their eternal sufferings; † and so teach us to love and use our bodies as servants to our souls in this world! and as expecting to share in glory with them, after the resurrection: It may also help to *moderate* our *desires* after earthly good, and so cure the *lust of the eyes*, by letting us see the vanity, uncertainty, and short duration of these things, and their insufficiency to make us happy, and give us true content.

The thoughts of an approaching change may, if any thing will do it, damp the mirth of the *luxurious Epicure*, and strike him into a fit of trembling, as the hand-writting on the wall did *Belshazzar*. † It may discover the distraction of living in pleasure, and of care to please the senses and the fleshly appetite, when the end is so near. † It may likewise check the folly of *ambitious desires*; that men should make so much ado to get into slippery places, from whence they may so easily fall. — Where, being puff'd up with vain applause, — they forget themselves, and their latter end, till their life and glory expire together: Where are now the great, and mighty, and honourable, who have made such a noise in the world?



72 *Serious REFLECTIONS*

world? What is now the *difference* between the *dust* of an *Alexander* or *Cæsar*, and that of their meanest slaves or captives? Could their dignities and earthly glory preserve any of them from the stroke of death, or the judgment of God, or, without repentance, from his condemning sentence?

Think, *O my soul!* how little it will shortly signify, whether I have been known and honoured among men or no; any farther than God may be glorified by it. \* How should it suppress vain-glory? to think of being one day esteemed, and worship'd, reverenc'd, and applauded by dying men, and laid in the grave *the next*? Let me rather seek that glory and honour to which *immortality* is annex'd; and labour to be accepted of God, at whose bar I must be judged, endeavouring to keep the testimony of a good conscience, and then it is not much whether I pass through good report, no contempt, or frowns, or threatnings of men need then discourage me. Tho' I should be trampled on by the foot of pride, while others are happy in a dream for a little while; and it may be have a prosperous passage to damnation; I'll rather thank God for delivering me from their temptations, and giving me the opportunity and call to hasten my preparations for a *better world*.

Let God dispose of my condition here, and *reputation* too, as best shall please his sovereign will; only to be pleased to keep me upright, and to preserve me from everlasting shame and confusion of face, after the general resurrection

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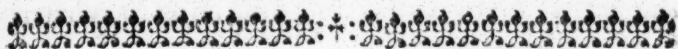
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## on TIME and ETERNITY. 73

tion, and final judgment. Vouchsafe me a portion now in thy approving love, and own me for *thine* at last, in the great and terrible day of reckoning; that then I may hear the blessed *Euge*, and enter into my Lord's joy.



### S E C T. XVII.

*The same argument considered farther, as dissuasive from worldliness, and earthly-mindedness; and as proper to confute the vanity of long projects, and great designs for this world.*

**A**RE the years of my life but few, and they hastening to a period? and may *this* be my last? Let me not then greedily covet riches and abundance, and waste my little time to scrape together large provisions for *many years* to come; when I have no assurance to see the end of *this*. Is it becoming such a belief, to toil from day to day, that I may lay up that which I must soon leave? As if I were to spend an *eternity* here on earth, and in the mean while neglect the *one thing necessary*. Am I not upon the shore of eternity? May not the next tide carry me off? And shall I spend my whole life in diversions from the main business of it? Have I nothing else to do, but to gather shells, (if they were *pearls*, the absurdity were still the same) and pile them upon heaps, till I am  
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snatched away, past all recovery? Shall I be regardless of an eternal state, and run the hazard of being undone for ever, by solicitous care about pretended *necessaries* for a long abode on earth, (much less for *superfluities*;) when I am not certain of the possession, *this one year*? Shall I magnify and admire what is soon to be parted with? Value myself upon these things, so as to despise those that have *less*, and envy such as have *more*? and suffer my mind to be distempered, and my passions immoderate on every change of these things?

Though I know besides my own mortality, that to enforce the argument, there is a principle of *corruption* in all these things; that our very *manna* here, in a little while will stink; and *bread* which is the staff of life, moulder; our richest *garments* wax old, and rot; *silver* and *gold* rust, and the greatest *beauty* wither, and every thing that is *earthly* decay and perish. And shall not this teach me to sit loose from all such things? Can I imagine, that in my last hour it will be *easier* to part with *much*, than little? Or better in the day of judgment, to have a great estate to answer for, than a lesser one?

We read concerning the patriarch *Abraham*, (who rightly understood the transitory nature of riches, and his own mutable condition,) that the only *purchase* he made with his riches was a *grave*; chusing to take possession of the land promised him, rather by a mark of his parting with it, than of his possessing it. Did I think oftner and more seriously, *O my soul!* of tarrying here but a little while; I should

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## on TIME and ETERNITY. 75

more easily be persuaded, that a *little* of this world were sufficient to carry me through it. I should consider more that my *heaven-born soul* is made and designed for another, an endless world: And therefore should not so far forget his own people, and father's house; as eagerly to pursue and seek what is suited only to the *body*, for a little while; and whereof a little with contentment will be sufficient.

The same reflection may be useful to contract our thoughts to *present duty*; that we may not perplex our minds with *long designs* and *projects*, which, if we dye *this year*, will come to nothing. Our great business in this world is adapted to the little portion of time which is allowed us. Not that good designs for the public benefit may not be begun by one, and finished by others; or that we are not obliged, prudently to provide for those who shall come after us, by attempting many things of *probable advantage* to posterity. But considering the shortness and uncertainty of life, not only the *most necessary* things should be *first* minded, and not put off by prosecuting such designs, as may signify somewhat to others, when we are dead: but we should not now omit that which we may hope to compass ourselves: to begin such things, whose accomplishment must depend on the pleasure of our successors, consideration and faithful counsel would in this case have prevented the fruitless expence of many mens time and money, which if otherwise employed, might have turned



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ned to good account to themselves and others. ✕

And this heightens our folly, that while we pursue great projects in reference to *this* world, and die without effecting them, our preparations for *eternity* are neglected ; and so we are suddenly cut off in the midst of our folly, and *all our thoughts perish*. How easily, how soon may they do so ! The difference and distance between death and life, being no more than that of a *candle lighted*, from its being *blown out* ; and if it is exposed to all winds, how quickly may that happen ?



### S E C T. XVIII.

*The consideration of the certain near approach of an everlasting state amplified and pressed, to enforce an holy life.*

**I**N this world we begin a year, and quickly come to the end of it ; and e're long the little number of our years and days will be expired. ✕ But when death conveys us into the world of spirits, the day of *eternity* shall never be closed with an evening. ▽ Of how fearful consequence is that *death*, by which an *eternity* must be decided ! What attention, what seriousness, what diligence, what care, doth the decision of so important a matter call for ? E T E R N A L ! What will be the next word, *O my soul !* How much am I concerned

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## on TIME and ETERNITY. 77

cerned to know it ! Will it be blessedness or misery ? will it be life or death ? *This one word* is the joy of angels and the horror of devils ; the unspeakable delight of blessed saints and the confusion and despair of condemned sinners.

At the creation of the world, *time* got the start of us, and was *five days* elder than we ; but our immortal souls shall endure beyond the utmost limits of time, and last as long as the everlasting Father of spirits, of whose duration there is no end. Shall I then exist and live, though my body perish and see corruption ? Shall my soul, *myself* exist beyond the grave, in felicity or misery ; and that for ever, and according to my present actions ? What am I then most concerned to mind ? What am I to chuse ; What am I most to fear, to wish to do ? What is a shadow of honour and reputation among dying men ? What are a few drops of fleshly pleasure, for a moment, to eternal rivers of pleasure at God's right hand ? What are the suffering of an hour or two, to the pains and anguish of eternity ? What can the world, flesh, or devil, give me comparable to eternal life ? What can I suffer in the way of holiness, that may be set in the ballance against an everlasting hell ? And yet how often, *O my soul !* How boldly, how unconcernedly, how foolishly do I hazard the one and forfeit the other, for the sins and vanities of *this world* ! Whereas one prospect of *eternity*, should make every thing that is *temporal* ; appear little in my eyes ; the highest elevations of earthly greatness, abundance of

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riches, the great affairs, business, and employments of the world, pomp and splendor, and reputation, and that now flatter the senses, and the vanity of mankind.

Oh! that I could but live, as believing and expecting *an eternal state*! As having it in my eye, managing all my affairs with a visible reference to it; discovering to all the world, by my behaviour and deportment, that I do in earnest believe it certain; for be it never so *certain*, if I do not apprehend and consider it as *such*, it will no more affect me than a fable. ✕ Neither is it enough to consider it as *certain*, but as *near*: For the most weighty, the most terrible things, apprehended as at a great *distance*, will little move. ✕ Thinking of the long interval between the advantage of being exempted from such evils for so long a time, will please me more than such distant calamities will affright.

Let me therefore endeavour to impresse the consideration of *eternity*, as at hand, more deeply on my heart, that I may walk and live, discourse and pray, and demean myself in every thing, as *near* an unchangeable state. Am I not convinced that this is certain, from the nature and operations of my soul, from the reflections of conscience, from the righteousness of God in his government of the world, from the present unequal distributions of good and evil by his providence, and from the plain and frequent assertions of his revealed will? I have nothing to object, nothing to reply; but I find a necessity of inculcating and urging the consideration of it in order

## on TIME and ETERNITY. 79

to its influence. I find it needful to reflect often, how *near* I am to such an endless state; that in *one instant* by death, I enter upon it : And that *this instant* may be as near me, as my *next thoughts*. That the holy scripture describes the two contrary conditions after death, (and every man and woman in the world shall share in one of them) as both everlasting ! The one, by *eternal life, eternal glory, an incorruptible crown that fadeth not away, an incorruptible inheritance, an house eternal in the heavens, &c.* the other, by *unquenchable fire, a prison whence no escape, eternal damnation, everlasting burning, everlasting punishment, everlasting destruction, a worm that never dies, wrath that is ever to come, blackness of darkness for ever, ever, &c.*

Think, O my soul ! That in *one* of these two contrary states, I must abide *for ever* ; in endless joy, or sorrow : blessed in the presence of God, or for ever banished from it. And whoever thou art that readest this, apply it seriously to thyself, *it is thine own case*. Yea, I tell thee from God, that holiness of heart and life is absolutely necessary to the former, and that without thou shalt never see his face ; but be punished with everlasting destruction, from the presence of his glory.

Is this an unquestionable truth ? O let me consider it, till I feel the power and efficacy of so important a principle ! Let the impression be deep and lasting ! Let it pierce and enter into my very soul ! to cool the heats of lust, to quench sensual and earthly desires, and to mortify all inordinate affections to this world,



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world; and fix my resolutions to mind, and seek eternal life with all my heart! —

These are not difficult and perplexed *niceties*, which wise and holy men differ and disagree about. They are not metaphysical subtleties, which few can understand; but the express word of *God*, and the daily dictates of my own reason and conscience, which all christians, and almost all men in their wits (except in an hour of great temptation) confess and own; or whether they will or no, are forced to expect and fear, if they are not in a condition to consider them with a joyful hope.

*Lord!* cure the unbelieving doubts concerning these great things, which notwithstanding the plainest evidence, the devil may at any time suggest! Let a confirmed *faith* be the *reality* of what is thus *future*; that my soul may be influenced by them, as it is wont to be by things *present*. Let it be the *substance* of things hoped for, and the *evidence* of things unseen, and as yet at a distance; as if the day of judgment were already come, and there were no intermediate time to pass, between this and that.

*O eternity! eternity!* the more I consider it, the more unfathomable still I find it. *Unchangeable blessedness*, or *remediless endless torments!* an eternal blissful day, or everlasting horror, darkness and despair! life or death, glory or destruction to last as long as the immutable, living God! none of the patriarchs who lived longest, arrived to the period of a *thousand years*, which in comparison of God's everlastingness

## on TIME and ETERNITY. 81

tingness is set forth but *as one day*. But strictly considered, millions of years and ages have *no proportion* with it ; because no multiplication of them will amount to *eternity*. Whereas one hour hath *some* proportion to an hundred thousand years, because a certain number of hours will amount to so many years. But no number of years or ages, never so often multiplied, will make up *eternity* : as no subtraction of millions of years will lessen it ; an *entire eternity* will be still to come, and will be ever to come. When innumerable myriads of years are past, eternity shall then seem but to begin, because when as many more are over, it shall be as far from an end.

Oh ! that the thoughts of eternity may be powerful, and prevailing above all others ! that I may judge of every thing by its relation to it, by its influence upon it ! Chuse now, *my soul*, whether *everlasting joys*, or miseries, shall be thy portion : but consider well that thine *eternity* is concerned in thy present choice ; and that this choice must be pursued with steadfastness and constancy, as long as I live : and what are a few years to prepare for an eternal ? Were we obliged to spend several hundred years in serious, humble preparation for it, with the greatest strictness and severity of life, during all that time ; it were infinitely less, than to spend an hour or two, in preparing for the greatest dignity and employ on earth, which can be enjoyed but for a few years at longest. For to these an hour hath *some* proportion ; but an hundred or thousand have none with an *everlasting*

ting duration. Therefore to consider, how many years of toil, and pains, and diligence, many bestow on the probable prospect of some temporal good, should reprove and shame my negligence and remissness, in providing for eternity. —



## S E C T. XIX.

*The punishments of the damned considered as intolerable and everlasting, and as unquestionably certain. What the reflections upon hell-torments may, and ought to teach us.*

**T**H E fear of the Lord, is the *beginning* of wisdom, the entrance into the way of life, as it is ordinarily one of the *first* means to awaken the soul to a serious concern for eternity : Let me therefore first consider the *endless punishment* of the wicked in the other world, before I enter upon the ravishing prospect of the blessedness of heaven, promised to the righthous. And with what serious trembling should I think of the terrors of an *everlasting destruction*, when our Lord shall be revealed from heaven to render to all, who know not God, and obey not the gospel. When the wicked shall go away into everlasting punishment ; as the righteous into life eternal. The *dreadfulness* of that punishment, the *endless duration* of it, joined to the consideration of  
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## on TIME and ETERNITY. 83

its unquestionable *certainty*, deserve the most attentive thoughts of every man who loves his soul, and would manifest he doth so, by securing his greatest interest. +

The description of that misery, under insupportable and eternal torments, demands more than a transient view ; because no words can sufficiently express the horror of that state. What is it, *O my soul !* to be banished from the blessed sight and presence of God for ever, and all the impressions of his holy image and likeness ? and to know that this is the fruit of my own choice ; that I lost it by my own fault and folly ; that I deserved to lose it ; that the sentence is as *just* as it is irrecoverable ? Who can fully imagine the dismal despair of a condemned sinner, under the anguish of a *guilty, self-accusing mind* ? while under the stroke of God's almighty, revenging justice, with a distincter view and knowledge than now, of God and his excellencies ; of himself and his own vileness and malignity, which must greatly encrease his rage and torment. Add to this, his being enraged by the accusations and cries of wicked *acquaintance and relations* ; and his being mocked, and insulted over, and tortured, by malicious damned *spirits* ; with a clear understanding of that glorious felicity he despised, refused, and forfeited ; with a deep sense of his former *madness*, in preferring the sinful pleasures and advantages of this world ; and this after so many warnings and invitations, and calls from God, to have prevented it ; and never to be diverted one moment from



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from the consideration, sense and feeling of his misery, and the duration of it ; to have all his *passions* let loose with the greatest violence, and nothing to satisfy them ; and continually to preserve an *hell* of wickedness and horror *in himself* ; and to endure the reproaches, convictions, regrets, and stinging reflections of conscience, *the gnawing worm which shall never die* : Who can conceive the unspeakable misery of such an accursed state ? *So great a calamity, and yet everlasting!* ✕

How long doth one day or night now seem to a man under some violent racking *pain*, in any one part of his body, though he be under the means for cure, and have his friends about him to pity him, comfort and assist him, with the hopes of ease in a little while, and the certain knowledge that it cannot last long ? Oh ! what then will be the dismal state of the tormented(\*) sinners in *hell* ! how infinitely must it exceed the most terrible idea we can now frame of it ! to languish out a long eternity, in that gulph of darkness and despair, under unpitied, intolerable torments without intermission, or hope of end ! miseries without measure ! judgment without mercy, pains and sorrows intense, and yet endless ! without the least succour or relief, relaxation or remedy, diminution or change ! without a drop of comfort ! without a moment's rest ! without the smallest beam of light. or the least glimmering of hope ! perpetually dying, and never dead ! under *unsufferable wrath*, which yet will be for ever *wrath to come* ! seeking death,

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(\*) See Mr. Baxter's *saints rest*, part 2. chap. 4.

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## on TIME and ETERNITY. 85

and never able to find it, but eternally to endure all that calamity, which the conjunction of death and life together, can render dreadful !

What groans and cries will these thoughts, and these sufferings wring from their hearts ! but no refuge will then be found, no excuses admitted, no prayers, no entreaties will then prevail, no tears move pity. *He that made them will shew them no mercy, and he that formed them will shew them no favour.* 'Tis never, never, that is the killing word, that breaks the heart of those hopeless prisoners, in the place of torment. When once deliver'd over to that prison of God's wrath, they shall no longer be *prisoners of hope*. Judgment shall be brought forth unto final victory ; and the redemption of the soul shall cease for ever.

The vain hopes of sinners shall then be ended in eternal desperation ; *hell* will be full of those who did once *hope* they should never come *there* : and full of those who *despair* of deliverance from thence ; but shall suffer exquisite pains that cannot be numbered, or measured, or endured ; but that every *minute* of an hour will seem an whole year, and yet must *eternally* be endured by miserable sinners, who will not be wise in time, to prevent such an intolerable portion ? Let me therefore, *O my soul*, descend *into hell* by meditation, whilst I live, that I may not descend thither when I die ; and be shut up for ever in that prison, the place of endless torment.

Might we but suppose, that one of those miserable souls did let fall but one tear, in an

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## 86 *Serious* REFLECTIONS

*hundred thousand years*; and if after he had by this means wept so much, as that his tears would equal the *drops* of water in the whole *sea*, his misery should have an *end*; this were *hope*, this were *comfort*. ✕ But alas! after that period, his misery will be *as far* from an end, as when he *first* began to feel it. ✕ It will then be but *the beginning of sorrows*, which will *never, never, never end*. —

Think, *O my soul!* that this is the portion of the sinner's cup; ✕ this is the wages of *sin*, and the certain doom of final impenitence and unbelief. ✕ 'Tis no politick cheat, or melancholy dream, but the express repeated word of God, and Christ, the holy prophets and apostles, and the voice of *reason* too. ✕ Supposing but the immortality of the soul, and the power of self-reflection, the punishment of sinners must needs be *everlasting*, as carrying continually an hell within them; ✕ unless God work a miracle to prevent it, which there is no ground to imagine he will, or shadow of reason why he should. ✕ God hath pawn'd his *truth*, and his (\*) *eternity*, to execute this sentence of his threatned wrath. ✕ He is a God of infinite *mercy*, 'tis true; but he hath told us how far his mercy shall extend. ✕ He will not exercise *one attribute* to the dishonour and the disparagement of the rest. ✕ That obstinate and impenitent sinners shall thus perish, is not because the *goodness* and *mercy* of God are not *infinite*, but because his other perfections are so; *viz.* His holiness,

(\*) Deut. xxxii. 4.

## on TIME and ETERNITY. 87

ness, justice, truth, sovereignty and wisdom. Was it wisdom and goodness to annex such a penalty to the violation of his law? and can it be inconsistent with them to inflict his threatened wrath? \*

Shall we suppose God to uphold his dominion and government by a falsehood? to keep the world in awe by the menaces of such punishment, as shall no where, never be executed? Is it unlikely, that God should exercise so much severity? And is it not as improbable, that his repeated word and oath should prove false? Is it not a righteous thing with God, as the Governour of the world, thus to punish the obstinate despisers of his grace? \* Who slighted his authority, disobeyed his law, affronted his sovereignty, derided his power, denied his truth, contradicted his holiness, and joyned issue with the Devil, to pull him from his throne who abused his patience and long suffering, and scorned all his threatnings; \* who thrust away their own happiness, and would not take warning; who burst all his bands asunder, and broke through all obstructions; and would not be stop'd in their course of vanity and folly, \* or so much as consider the danger; who rejected his calls to repentance, and refused his mercy, when it was offered; and preferred a lust before his favour, and the pleasures and profits of this world, before the heavenly glory; and notwithstanding all the methods of his grace, and the checks of his providence, and of their own conscience, they will go on, they *will die*? \* +



## 88 *Serious* REFLECTIONS

Let me, *O my soul!* adore the *sovereign justice* of God in all his judgments; and tremble at the threatnings of that *eternal wrath*, which so few consider or believe, till 'tis too late. ✕ Let the foresight and the fear of such an intolerable, endless punishment, be a means to save me from it! Let me herein read the evil of sin, and learn to abhor and avoid it. Let me pity, and warn, and counsel, and pray for those of my relations and acquaintance, who live in sin, and run the hazard of this eternal ruin. ✕ Let me not envy the foolish mirth, and momentary prosperity of the wicked, whose present joy must e'er long expire, and an everlasting destruction succeed in its room. ✕ (\*) *How short is the joy of the hypocrite! and the triumph of the wicked is but for a moment.* ✕ Let me fear and dread every thing that leads to this dismal issue, and improve every thing that may help me to escape it. And by consequence, let me value all the good and evil of this present life; judge of all things by this light; be patient under temporal calamities, and thank God that it is not *hell*; and thank him more, that present sufferings do help to save me from eternal ones.

Whatever I can suffer in *this* world, let my condition be never so dark, and sad, and afflicted, it is not, it cannot be such, but that *every one* of the *damned* would think it an infinite happiness to exchange with me, and be as I am. Let me think of those exquisite and eternal flames, to cure my *impatience*, under the sharpest tryals and afflictions I may now suffer.

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(\*) Job. xx. 5.

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## on TIME and ETERNITY. 89

Did I believingly consider an *everlasting Hell* \* I should not think much of any thing that is required to prevent it. † The severest exercises of religion, the strictest temperance, the nicest charity, the largest charity, the greatest self-denial, all the hardships of repentance and mortification, and continuance therein to death, though for many years more than I am like to live, would be reckon'd *ease* as well as *just*, if set in the ballance against the eternal mischiefs of the damned. †

What will not men do and suffer, to prevent a *temporal* death? † They will endure a painful course of physick; tear out their very bowels, by purges and vomits; and are content to be cut and scarrified, † and to suffer any thing almost to save their lives: † But how little will they do to be saved from the wrath to come! † One would think, they should have no rest, or peace, or be able to live a quiet hour, till they had made some provision against the hazard of this *eternal destruction*; and look upon all men as their friends, or enemies, according to the help or hindrance, they received from them, in reference to it. † But the direct *contrary* is every where apparent. Men are *careless* and secure, jovial and merry, in the way that leads to hell; and esteem, and love, and chuse that company that will help to bring them to this place of torment: † yea, such is their stupidity, and strange perverseness, that they will not suffer to be *told* of their *danger*. † If you tell them, that by such a course, or such an ac-

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\* *Qui non expergiscitur ad hæc tonitrua, jam non dormit, sed mortuus est.* S. Augustine.

90 *Serious* REFLECTIONS

tion, they will lose so much money, or their lives will be in danger, they reckon it an obligation, will take it kindly, and return you thanks: but when they are told, by such courses and actions they will lose their souls, and the favour of God, and the hopes of heaven, and must perish *for ever*; this they will not receive, they despise the message, and scorn and hate the messenger; are displeased and angry at such faithfulness. ✕

*O bless the Lord, O my soul!* for any good hope, *through grace*, of escaping this intolerable and endless misery. ✕ *And let all that is within me, bless his holy name.* I have deserved the same endless and unsupportable wrath, which thousands are now under, and shall be under to all eternity; but he did not suffer me to fall into it. ✕ To be delivered out of those torments after many years misery, would be thought an admirable, unspeakable kindness: and is it not a greater favour, never to be thrown into *hell* which I have so often deserved? How grateful would a damned person be, to be freed from those flames, and plac'd in the same condition I now am in? What a life of serious, self-denying obedience would he lead? And hath not God done *more* for me? Am I not *more indebted* to his goodness? He hath kept me out of *hell*, and offers me the heavenly glory upon reasonable, honourable, and easy terms. ✕ Blessed be God, I may yet escape the wrath to come. ✕

Let me heartily compassionate the delusion of those multitudes of *deceived*, perishing souls, whose eyes are blinded by the God of this world.

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## on TIME and ETERNITY. 91

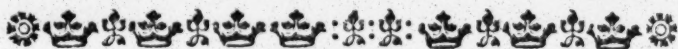
world; who will not believe it, till they are convinc'd by the light of that fire, which shall never be extinguish'd. †Yea, when I read, or hear of ten or twenty thousand men slain in a war, (whether of *Infidels* or *Christians*) let me think of it, with other apprehensions than formerly I was wont to do. † Considering that many, it may be the most of these, shall never have any comfort or mercy more; fearing lest the same sword or bullet that gave them their mortal wound, hath fix'd them under God's *everlasting wrath*; and that by dying, they are undone for ever.

In very many other cases, the faith of *this article* would rectify my opinion, and direct my actions, if seriously considered and improved. † This would make me think of *death* under another notion than 'tis commonly considered. For without the consideration of *hell* annexed to it, it is not so very formidable, but that *heathens* have been able to despise it. The most contrary sects among them on different grounds have been able to do it; but consider *death* as a passage to eternal misery, as the gate of hell, as the end of all comfort to a wicked man, and the beginning of an endless calamity, and nothing can be imagined more *dreadful* to a guilty unholy soul. Some of my *acquaintance*, it may be, who died this last year, are now among those hopeless, despairing wretches, who expect the final judgment of God, to consummate their insupportable misery. If they were permitted to come and tell us what they suffer, and what they know; what a terrible *consuming fire* God



92 *Serious* REFLECTIONS

God is; what vanity, lust, and folly, brought them to this place of torment; what diligence they would advise us to, while in a state of hope, to prevent the like; if we have any love and kindness for ourselves, any bowels of compassion to our own souls, what a change do we think it would work upon us? But if we will not *hear Moses and the prophets, Christ, and his apostles*; neither should we believe, tho' one came from the dead. —



S E C T. XX.

*The eternal blessedness of H E A V E N, considered as the perfection of holiness, to quicken our desires and endeavours after greater meetness to possess it.*

**D**O T H one year after another hasten me to the end of time? And doth the blessedness of eternity depend on the communications I now receive from God? On the preparations I now make and the meetness I can now attain for eternal felicity in the presence of my God and Saviour? O, with what intenseness of mind should I now prosecute that glorious object! with what unwearied diligence should I run the race that is set before me, lest I fall short of the incorruptible crown of life! How should every thing be undervalued and rejected, that would divert, retard, or hinder me from pursuing this end! *Lord, be not*

on TIME and ETERNITY. 93

not a stranger to my soul, in this distant wilderness state! let me see more of thy light! be transform'd more into thine image! experience more of thy love! feel more of thy vital presence, and quickning spirit; let the divine life in my soul be more powerful, and the characters of the likeness be more legibly stamp'd upon it! by the daily exercise of faith, and hope, and holy affections, carry me thro' this world, till my pilgrim state be over, and thou hast brought me to *perfect everlasting holiness*! And let the believing fore-thoughts of it, fill all the powers of my soul with joy and wonder, desire and love! +

Give me, *Lord*! to think aright of the heavenly glory; as a confirmed state of positive perfect *holiness*; of heavenly light, love, liberty, and joy, with the satisfying vision of God, in the face of Christ and his impressed likeness; dwelling for ever in the direct and steady view of his transforming glory; with compleat conformity of the soul to eternal goodness, truth and love, as its perfection; esteeming nothing, desiring nothing, but that God and Christ may be glorified, with an entire subjection to his will, adherence to him; rest and confidence in him, swallowed up in the love, admiration, and praise of God, and our Lord Jesus; living in joyful repeated acts of subjection, adoration, and acknowledg'd dependance; ravish'd to behold the glory of God in the face of Christ, to see his blessed image perfect in every one of the saints, &c. When all the present blindness of our minds, the errors of our judgment, the perverseness of

of our will, the disorder and rebellion of our passions, the remaining averſation from God, and diſaffection to him, which in this world we complain of, ſhall all be done away : The fleſh ſhall no more luſt againſt the ſpirit, nor the law in our members againſt the law of our minds ; but an everlaſting tranquility and holy peace take place ; a *peace* which paſſeth all underſtanding, without any outward moleſtation, or inward cauſe of diſquiet.

Our corrupted nature ſhall no more caſt forth mire and dirt as now ; we ſhall have no more vain, or wicked thoughts, no more ſinful fears or fooliſh hopes ; unbecoming heats, unruly deſires, ſenſual inclinations, earthly affections, feeble, ſlothful, ſpiritleſs duties, dead and heartleſs prayers, cold thankſgiving, &c. ✕ But as we ſhall then know God without errors, and ſee our Lord Jeſus face to face ; ſo we ſhall love him without reſerve, more than now we can think ; and ſerve him without dulneſs and diſtraction, and praiſe him without wearineſs ; the ſpiritual actings of our ſouls ſhall have no allay of dross. ✕ And thus ſhall we be with him, and admire and enjoy him *without end*.

Thus when *death is ſwallowed up in victory*, and what was imperfect is done away, and what was corruptible and mortal hath put on immortality ; *God in Chriſt ſhall be all in all* : and when it is truly and perfectly ſo, *then it is heaven* : the bleſſedneſs whereof is unconceivable. A *bleſſed* perſon is not expreſſ'd in the ſingular number by the *Hebrews*, but in the abſtract, and in the plural. *Beatitudes*,  
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## on TIME and ETERNITY. 95

instead of *blessed*, because the blessings are as many and great, as they have powers and capacities to partake of blessedness.† So will it be in *heaven*. A word, tho' commonly used, as little understood as *holiness*; which is one of the greatest mysteries in the world; but will hereafter be fully and delightfully understood by the blessed saints; 'as the malignity and intrinsic evil of *sin* shall be by the damned spirits.

Oh, that I might now feel more of this heavenly life, begun and carried on in my soul, by a farther participation of his holy image, and conformity to his will! by more vital effects of his indwelling spirit in my soul, forming it to be a temple to himself, for his own delightful residence! that forgetting that which I have received, I may still be coveting, and desirous of more; forgetting what I have attain'd, I may press on with an holy eagerness and fervency towards the mark! —

When I seriously examine my own heart, had I nothing else to prove the weakness of my grace, and the sinful remainders of unbelief, but the low desires, and the few comfortable thoughts, the seldom joyful prospect of this blessed state. How sad an evidence were it of my low attainments, that I breathe with no more impatience, after that *blessed holy rest*, in the enjoyment of God and Christ; and labour no more in preparing for it? When we profess to believe that all the desires of our souls shall be fix'd on *him*, and filled with *him*, as our *infinite* and *supream good*; and all the expectations of faith and hope swallowed  
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up in endless admiration, gratitude, and joy; being fully satisfied, and at rest, in the presence and vision of God; without the least inclination, or desire of change. And by consequence,

There will be no need of *novelty*, as now, to give a relish to our happiness. All happiness in this world is by comparing a man's present condition with his past, or with that of some inferiors. ✥ But the intrinsic good, felicity, and joy of heaven will need no such *foil* to set it off; no such comparison to make it prized. The blessed spirits will never lose the lively sense of that low and miserable condition, from which they were raised to so great a glory; and so will ever equally rejoice in the happiness of their translation and wonderful change. And what was at *first* delightful, will *for ever* be so; and not disdain'd, or less'n'd by a continuance; as it happens in this world, from the emptiness, shallowness, and vanity of the creature. An affectation of *variety*, and desire of *change*, proceeding always from a sense of *want*. But holy souls shall never be weary of seeing, loving, and enjoying God; his blessed presence will afford us undecaying and endless satisfaction; pleasure never to be interrupted, or abated, and never to cease. ✥ The blessed *object* is absolutely *infinite*, and so will be always *new* to a finite understanding, and continual fresh communications from his infinite fulness, must needs make our subjective happiness to be always *new* and eternally such. ✥

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## on TIME and ETERNITY. 97

Let me by such thoughts quicken and excite my diligent endeavours; after a greater meetness to enjoy so great a bliss.† And to that end, consider whether any of those happy souls who have finish'd their course, and obtained the prize, do now regret their utmost diligence, patience and perseverance, during their short abode here, to secure the blessedness of an endless life: *no, no*, they are far from repenting the time they spent, the trouble they were at, the care they used, the difficulties they met with, the sufferings they endured; to conflict with the world and the flesh, to resist temptation, to watch over their hearts, and words, and ways, to work out their salvation, to please God, and be faithful to him, &c. They find, to their unspeakable comfort, and everlasting joy, that *heaven* makes amends for *all* they could do or suffer, in order to their coming *thither*. Yea, they find that they were not diligent, and humble, and patient, and circumspect enough. That they did not love God, and seek his glory, redeem their time, and improve all their talents and opportunities of doing and receiving good, and give up themselves intirely to prepare for heaven, to that degree they should have done. They find, by the transcendency of the blessed recompence, that it deserved infinitely *more* than the most active, zealous christian upon earth did ever do in order to it.

Lord! Quicken my resolutions and endeavours, by such thoughts as these.† Inspire my sluggish, carnal heart, with holy light, and life, and zeal, and fervour! that *looking to the things*

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*things which are not seen, which are eternal; I may \* lay up a good foundation against the time to come, and so lay hold on eternal life!*

But *alas!* How much have I neglected the great duty of holy *meditation!* How little skill and experience have I in it! How tasteless and insipid oftentimes are my thoughts of God! how confused and unsteady! how little pleasure or advantage have I, by contemplating his highest excellencies! Yet, methinks, could I but retain the same awakened, lively thoughts of heaven and eternal life, which *sometimes* I have had; might I continually feel the sweet and sacred influence, as for a *little season* I have sometimes felt it; how little, how very a *nothing*, would all *this world* be to me! How comparatively weak, its strongest and most alluring snares to draw me off from God! with what an unshaken mind could I refuse and resist them! with what an unconcerned *indifference*, could I look upon all its most charming glory! —

Could I maintain such a frame of spirit, as I have sometimes had for a little while; in the serious contemplation of divine mysteries, in fervent prayers, and other solemn duties of religion; when the acts of faith were strong and lively, my heart set on fire with love to God, and holy breathings after him; admiring his matchless grace to fallen sinners, (and to my soul in particular) when he brought me to the very suburbs of heaven, (tho' *alas!* how *seldom!*) by the delightful thought of what the blessed spirits above enjoy, in being

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on TIME and ETERNITY. 99

where Christ is, and beholding his glory; when I was ready to say within myself, 'Tis good to be here; this is no other than the gate of heaven; Oh! when shall mortality be swallowed up of life! But when I thought at any time to fix and settle in such sweet contemplations, how quickly did my lazy, backward-heart fly off! how soon did the flame decay and die away! how soon did I find myself fallen down to earth again! sunk down from the bosom of my Lord, presently forgot myself and heaven, to dwell among the pots, and embrace a dunghil! 'Twas not on my own wings, O Lord! that I soared so high; but I hope by the breathings of that holy spirit of light and love, who bloweth when, and where, and how long he listeth; who gave me at any time, any such *first fruits of the spirit*; who convinc'd me of the *certainty* of the heavenly inheritance, by a lively believing foresight of it; who made me earnestly desire the wings of a dove to be gone, and appear before God in *Sion*; made me pant and groan to be delivered, and to be with God and Christ with inexpressible desire and joy, unconceivably mix'd with sighs and groans. O my God! let not this experience be only such a *taste* of the powers of the world to come, as is consistent with final *Apostacy*! only the seeming zeal of the stony ground! the rapturous joy of an hypocrite! from the power of imagination, and a heated fancy; from the workings of meer natural self-love; upon mistaken apprehensions of God, and a false opinion of heaven; but by the holy effects,

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100 *Serious REFLECTIONS*

fects, let me not be of the cause and principle ; that was of God. —

Teach me from the sweetness of all spiritual communion with God *now*, in any of his appointed ordinances ; to argue to my self what the most ravishing satisfaction will be, that the enjoyment of God in heaven will afford the soul. \ Our holiness is now imperfect to what it shall be ; and therefore our consolation, peace, and joy, is but *in part* ; and incomparably less than we are assured it will be, when we shall be admitted to behold the *glory* of the Lord. X 'Tis now at most, but as the break of day to the lustre of the meridian sun. X But if in this low imperfect state, we can sometimes obtain so near a view of his glory, and feel such sweet communications of his grace ; how much more of this consolation and joy is reserved in heaven ? X If in this pilgrim state the gifts and graces, and comforts of the holy spirit are so refreshing ; O ! what hath God prepared beyond the grave, for those who love him ? If now he sometimes sheds abroad his love in our hearts, after such a manner ; how much better shall I love him, and feel the influence and evidence of his love to me ; when I shall be with him, and see him face to face ? If the apprehensions of this future blessedness do now encourage, raise, and animate my drooping soul ; O ! what shall I know and see ? And how shall I rejoyce when the veil is removed ? If a sacramental communion with God and Jesus Christ, be sometimes so sweet and so affecting ; what will the blessed communion

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on with God and all his saints *above* amount to? When I shall sit down with all the children of God, in the presence of the bridegroom, at the last great supper of the lamb in glory! If the *earnest* of our inheritance be so reviving, what will be the full possession of it? If the hopes of that glorious day, by holy meditation, be so transporting, what will be the end of our faith and hope? If a grape or two in the wilderness be such a cordial, what will be the whole vintage in the land of promise?

Shall I after all this, forget my own *experience*, and run from God and heaven, to embrace or seek a perishing toy? Shall I hide my face with *Saul* among the stuff and lumber of this world; when God is calling me to a *glorious crown*? Art thou, *O my soul!* a king's son, an heir of heaven, an expectant of such great felicity, and yet stoop so low? Hope for heaven, and yet grasp this earth; and hug the vain appearances of earthly good? Hope to be *like to God*, (and Oh how glorious an hope is that!) to partake of his image, and eternally with him; and yet be solicitous, anxious, and disquieted about honour, and money, and a temporal interest? And mightily concerned about the momentary gratifications of the flesh, and the enjoyments of this world? Art thou a pilgrim and stranger here, and travelling home to the heavenly country, and yet eager and passionate about earthly things? Should an heart that is set upon heaven, (or may be so, and ought to be so) should it burn with such *kitchen*, such *common fire*; and neglect the unconceivable riches and pleasures, and immor-

## 102 *Serious* REFLECTIONS

tal honours of the *other life*, and the dawnings of that glory upon my soul, by the foretastes of it in *this*? How great is the disproportion between the heavens and earth? How vast the circumference of the one, and how small a point the other? How many thousand miles doth the sun travel in the heavens, while it passeth but one inch upon a dial? Oh that my affections were carried to *heavenly* things, with a swiftness somewhat answerable to the glorious object! And let their motion to *earthly* things, be rather slow and insensible, like that of the sun on a dial. Since I profess to believe, and wait for the heavenly glory; should I not live as seeking such things, as expecting such a glory? And are careless and indifferent thoughts, sleepy, heartless prayers, faint and weak endeavours, becoming in such a case? Shall I not mend my pace, and double my diligence in my preparatory Work? When I can believingly foresee the blessed recompence; waiting for that *everlasting light* of the sun of righteousness, which no eclipse shall ever darken or obscure; for that eternal glorious day, which shall never be closed with an evening. When I shall see the face of God in Christ, and be like him; participate more of his image, rest in his love, and dwell for ever in the light of his countenance, according to the prayer and promise of my blessed Saviour.

And ought not such a prospect to sweeten the bitterness of all our intermediate sufferings? We are now oftentimes in heaviness and sorrow; but eternity will be enough for an uninterrupted

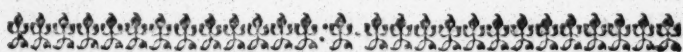
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uninterrupted joy. When we shall exchange all our troubles for everlasting rest, our prisons for perfect liberty, our poverty for the riches of God; darkness for light; discord for love; deformity for beauty; our weaknesses and present languishings, for strength and vigor; folly for wisdom; disgrace for glory; sickness and pain for eternal ease and health; the animal for the angelical life; imperfection and pollution for consummate holiness; our sighs and tears, and sorrows, and complaints, for triumphant everlasting praise; our losses, affronts, disappointments, perplexities, fears, groans, and death, for crowns and scepters, hymns and hallelujahs, light and life, and bliss unutterable; and such great things as are fit for us to *hope*, but too great to be now particularly understood, and talk'd of; while we know but in part, and see through a glass darkly. Yea, it seems as if it were not lawful to utter them, 2 Cor. 12. 4. and now they cannot be express'd, or fully known; *For eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, or can it enter into the heart of man to conceive that prepared glory.*



S E C T. XXI.

*A devout meditation upon Psalm 73. 25. Whom have I in heaven but thee? And there is none upon earth, that I desire besides thee.*

**W**HAT is there in heaven or earth, O Lord! but thy presence to be valued, loved, desired, chosen, sought, or delighted in?



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in? There is nothing in either world desirable *without thee*, nothing certainly *above thee*; nothing in comparison *with thee*. In *thee* alone I trust, on *thee* I depend; in *thee* I repose my confidence and hope; from *thee* I expect all my felicity and salvation. Whatever I can lose, yet with the continuance of *thy favour*, which is my life, I have still *enough*. With that I am *rich*, without it I am *poor* and *miserable*. And if I want the love of God, all that heaven and earth can give besides, will not make me happy. In *thee* therefore, I would terminate all my affections, all my devotions! there is nothing of *heaven* to be had on *earth*, but in thy favour, image, and love; and the reviving sense of it. And all the *heaven* I expect *hereafter*, 'tis in the more full and immediate communications of these, in thy blessed presence. I can *desire* nothing upon *earth*; I can *enjoy* nothing in *heaven* but *thee*! both here and there thou art, and *shall ever be* my all-sufficient, satisfactory portion, *my everlasting all*! none else can be the *portion of my soul*. Nothing else can fill up all its wants, answer all its cravings, be suited to all its capacities, appease and charm all its restless motions, and give complacence to all its desires, and be the proper object of all its *affections*. —

What is there else can justly claim my *love*, or pretend to my supream affection in comparison with *God*? Thou art alone the proper center of it. Thine infinite and incomparable excellencies, (who art *love itself*) deserve my choicest love; and thy numberless mercies and

— benefits

on TIME and ETERNITY. 105

benefits challenge it as a just debt, as a piece of homage due from all, and of special gratitude also from me. Oh, that I could love thee *above all things!* who alone art worthy of all my love! O that *divine love* might be the ruling principle within me! to inspire all my thoughts, to regulate all my desires, to set all the powers of my soul on work! O that it might take the full possession of my heart, and so animate and order all my actions to please him, whom my soul loveth! If as yet I cannot say with thine apostle; *Lord! thou that knowest all things thou knowest that I love thee:* yet I can say, *Lord, thou knowest that I would love thee!* Thou hast provided for our happiness, by that first and great command of loving thee with all our hearts, and souls, and strength. But alas! how backward is my sluggish, carnal heart, to this delightful exercise? Tho' I have so oft been told, that *God is love,* and that *he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him.* O shed abroad thy love into my soul! that I may feel the vital power and influence of it, and live continually in the *love* of God, and that nothing may ever be able to separate me from it.

Whom have I in heaven or earth to *hope in,* but *thee?* I expect more from creatures, than they can, or will perform; but God can do for me more abundantly than I can ask or think; exceed my largest thoughts, out-strip my highest expectations. And no man was ever disappointed, who made *thee* his *hope.* When I meet with crosses and wrongs, unfaithfulness, contempt, hatred and persecution  
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from men, I need not wonder; I was never told by God it would be otherwise here. Did I look for less from creatures, and expect more from God; Did I reckon this world to be a state of tryal, and not a place of rest and satisfaction; my faith and my desires would be stronger, with respect to God and heaven; and temporal calamities and disappointments less afflictive and vexatious.

And what is there, *O Lord!* in heaven, or in earth, my soul can *desire* besides *thee*? Is there any thing desirable but as it is thine, of thee, and from thee? And bears some impression of thine excellence, or brings some intimation of thy love? And what can I reasonably desire; what that is worth desiring, or having, but thou art able to *be*, and *do*, and *give*?

In whom, or what shall I *rejoyce*, but in *thee*, *O Lord*? shall I solace my self in transitory goods, that slip between my fingers, and perish in the using? or relish carnal joys, which pollute and debase the soul? When I may and ought to *rejoyce in thee* at all times, as the only source of perfect, everlasting joy. Let me then stir up my drooping, desponding, unbelieving heart to *rejoyce in God*; who takes pleasure in chearful service and obedience of his children; who delighteth in those who delight in him. Is not \* *delighting in God* a most essential, vital part of religion? Should it not be my constant frame? Hath not God sufficiently provided, that it may be so? Can I say and believe, that God is the portion of my

\* Vid. Mr. How, of *delighting in God*.

on TIME and ETERNITY. 107

my soul; that *he is my God*, and I hope to live with him *for ever*, and not *rejoyce*? Or can I consider the grace of the new covenant, the matchless love of Christ, and the precious promises of the gospel; and not see reason to *rejoyce*? Yea, doth my soul love God, and endeavour to please him; and is not the very act and exercise of holy love, mixt with unspeakable sweetness?

Whom is there in *heaven*, or in *earth*, or *hell*, that I ought to *fear* but *thee*? Who hath a negative voice in all the designs of men and devils; an hook in their nostrils; a bridle in their mouths, to make them fulfil thy pleasure; and in every thing accomplish thy sovereign decree.

Is there any other, in whom I may repose my trust, but in *thee*, O Lord! the rock of ages? The might of thy power, the unsearchableness of thy wisdom, the righteousness of thy nature, the stability of thy truth, the riches of thy grace, and the immutability of thy promises, are a sure foundation for my soul to trust to, and rely upon. Thy word stands firm for ever, and the *truth* of thine ability, and readiness to *help* in every time of need, *endures the same throughout all generations*. At all times, and in all places my soul may *trust* in thee, and find relief. And they who know thy name will do so; for *in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting kindness and strength*: to answer all my doubts, to supply all my wants, and fulfil all my desires. May not God take it unkindly, that I trust him no more? And is it not a criminal unkindness,



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ness, that I give him not the glory of all these excellent attributes, which are the grounds of trust; by a constant, steady, entire dependance on him for all that I need? —

I have none in heaven but *thee*, O Lord! as the object of my *invocation and worship*. Let other christians have recourse to *new mediators*, and call upon other Gods; I will make mention of *thy name*, and of thy righteousness *only*. And ask of the whatsoever I need, for the sake of *thy Christ* my *only* adorable *Mediator*. Him thou bearest always, with him thou art always well pleased. I honour the *holy angels* as glorious attendants about thy throne; and bless thee for them, as ministring spirits for the good of thy servants; but I dare not invoke or worship them, because they are *fellow servants*. On the same account, I honour the memory of *departed saints*, but neither invoke them, or pay them religious worship. That glory thou wilt not give unto another. I have no *precept* in holy scripture to direct, no *promise* to encourage, no *example* to authorize the invocation of any other but thee; *in whom I believe and trust*, Rom. 10. 14.

Having such a God in *heaven*, what can I need on *earth*? His eyes behold me, his wing is over me, his hand can suply me, his grace provide for me. I can *want nothing that is good*; unless I should need *somewhat* which God, the infinitely blessed and *all-sufficient good*, cannot bestow. If thou art the portion of my soul, all my *enemies* cannot make me *miserable*; unless they can void heaven of the presence

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on TIME and ETERNITY. 109

presence of God, hinder his care, bind up his hand, or obstruct his love. But tho' my enemies cannot, I fear my *sins* may. *They* alone can separate between God and my soul. And considering the *multitude* and *aggravations* of them, and thine unspotted holiness and justice; I should have too much reason to fear and tremble, yea, and utterly despair, *if I had none in heaven but thee.* But thy word assures me that I *have a mediator there; a faithful and a compassionate high-priest, Jesus Christ the righteous; whom thou hast exalted to be a prince and saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins. Who liveth for ever in heaven, to make intercession, till he hath brought me there to behold his glory, and partake of it.*

That glory, O Lord! thou hast reserved for *heaven*; in this world we only *desire*, believe, and hope to enjoy it. Whom *have I in heaven?* That is the place of *fruition*. What can I *desire* upon *earth*? This world is the place of *desires*, as the other of full *enjoyment*. Most of that which men call enjoyment in this life, consists but in desire. Desire or *lust* is all that is in the wicked world, 1 *John* 2. c. 13. The riches of a covetous worldling makes him desire more; and the great mystery of intemperance, is to create and encrease desires; and *desires* of another kind, are the portion of good men in this world.

Oh! that I could breathe after a state of perfect fruition in heaven, with more importunate desires! *Who will give me to be in heaven with thee? On earth I desire nothing.* So

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one version. Let me, *O my soul!* think of *heaven*, as such a place or state of *blessed enjoyment!* Speak of it, seek it, long for it, prepare for it as *such*. And set *Jesus Christ*, who is the *desire of all nations*, (through whom all divine communications are made to fallen sinners) be the great object of my present *desires and love!* Let me desire nothing but as *in him*, and for him; that believing his word, obeying his law, adoring his person, imitating his example, trusting his promise, constrained by his love, partaking of his image, filled with his grace, and comforted by his spirit, my meditations of him may be sweeter, and my love stronger, and I may have nothing more left to *desire* for my self, but that God who hath raised and exalted *him* would keep alive my faith and hope, and holy desires, till he hath made me *meet* to be with him; and after having guided me by his grace, and spirit, and counsels, here on earth, would receive me to his most blessed and glorious presence in heaven. *Amen. Amen.* —



### S E C T. XXII.

*The glorious appearance of Christ to judgment considered as certain: The terror and astonishment, confusion and despair of wicked Jews and Christians, to behold their judge, and hear his condemning sentence to EVERLASTING destruction.*

**W**HEN our blessed Saviour shall appear to judge the world, I read that it shall be, *in his own glory, the glory of his Father,* and

### on TIME and ETERNITY. III

*and of the holy angels.* If by the *glory of the Father* be meant that of the divinity, as the original and author of all things in nature; as the Creator of the world; and by the *glory of his holy angels*, be understood that of the legal administration, the *law* being given by the disposition of the angels; and by *his own glory*, that of the gospel, as he is the *Messiah*; that in the glory of all these he shall come to judgment: we have a summary account of the *three different revelations* which God hath made of himself to mankind; by the light of *nature*, that of the *law*, and the more manifest one of the *gospel*. According to which *every man* is to be judged at the last day.

Tho' we cannot distinctly tell what, or how great our Lord's *glory* will then be; we may be certain, it will be suitable to the dignity of his royal person suitable to the grandure of his Father's majesty; with the splendor of a *triumphant prince*, who is *heir of all things*; and hath all power in heaven and in earth committed to him; the great Lord of both worlds, head of angels and men; and suitable to his glorious office, as mediator, and the appointed judge of quick and dead.

If at his *transfiguration* his face shone; and his raiment was white and glittering; How much more splendored will his last appearance be? When the *bodies* of his saints shall be seven times brighter than the lustre of the *Sun*? And if his members shall then be so glorious, how transcendently more so will their head, their *Lord* appear? If the delivery and promul-



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gation of the *law* on mount *Sinai*, was accompanied with such circumstances of terrible majesty, how much more may we suppose the *great assize* will be attended with ; when he comes to judge for the violation of the *law*, and the contempt of the *gospel* ? And if even *Moses* did then exceedingly quake and fear, what will be the consternation and trembling of the wicked world at the coming of Christ ? *When he shall be revealed from heaven in flaming fire*, with a glorious retinue of his mighty angels, as so many bright stars, about the more glorious sun of righteousness. The lights of heaven shall be eclips'd ; the visible sun shall veil its blushing head, as infinitely outshone ; the present glory of the creation be all benighted, by reason of his transcendent brightness. — Yea, the heavens shall be warp'd up as a scroll ; the elements melt away with a mighty noise, the earth and all its works be burned up ; and the whole universe as one great bonfire, to adorn the *triumph* of our Lord's appearance. And this ushered in by the voice of an *archangel*, proclaiming his approach ; and the voice of God, supplying the use of a trumpet, to raise the dead, and possess mankind with an awful reverence of their judge.

Thus in triumph, as a *conqueror*, and a *judge*, shall he come again, who once appeared in the form of a servant, to be judged and condemned by man. *Then* he was called *king* in scorn : now he will appear as much above all earthly and human greatness, as once he stooped, for our sakes, beneath it. *Then* the contempt of nations, and no way ef-

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## on TIME and ETERNITY. 113

seemed desirable when he came from the womb of his virgin mother: *now* the terror of the world, when he comes again from the right-hand of his father. No more to be subject to a state of meanness, but *to render to all who know not God, and obey not the gospel: and to be glorified in the saints, and admired in, and by all them that believe* \*.

He was put to *shame* in the days of his flesh, made himself of no reputation, and accounted unworthy to live: but when he comes again, he shall put on a garment of vengeance, to repay furies to the enemies of his cross, and make his wicked despisers rise again to shame and everlasting contempt. They that once bowed the knee to him in *mockery*, and shook their heads at him in *derision*, shall then *see every knee bow before him, of things in heaven, things in earth, and under the earth*: angels men, and devils, in subjection to him; as Lord and King. *Pilate* who condemned him as his prisoner, shall appear before him as his rightful judge; and know that he was another guess king and monarch, than that *Roman* emperor. The *false witnesses* who accused him of blasphemy, shall be impeached by one another, and their own guilty consciences, before *his bar*; with the other *Jews*, who once dragged him before their tribunal; and be conounded to stand before his judgment-seat. His *crucifiers* shall behold on a throne of glory, whom they nailed to an infamous *cross*. They shall be astonished to behold him sitting at the right-hand of God,

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(\*) 2 Thess. chap. i.

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whose hands they bound, whose body they scourged, whose side they pierced. \ They who crowned him with *thorns* shall (with all the world) behold him with a crown of *glory*. They that spit on him, and smote him on the face with the fist of wickedness, shall have their own faces covered with confusion. \ They that approved his condemnation to death, as a criminal, shall be sentenced from his mouth, as their judge, to everlasting destruction. \ They that scourged him as a malefactor, shall be beaten with many stripes. \ They that made him stagger under the weight of his cross, shall sink under the guilt and punishment of despising it. \ They that nailed him to the accursed tree, between thieves and robbers, shall be sentenced to endless punishment, in much worse company. They who gave him gall and vinegar to drink, shall not be able to get a drop of water to cool their own tongues. \ Where then shall the wicked and ungodly of the *christian world* appear? who crucify the *son of God* afresh, since he hath declared himself to be *so*, by his resurrection, and the mission of the holy ghost, and fulfilling his threatened vengeance on the nation of the *Jews*. —

If the *Jews* shall have a forer condemnation than ignorant *Heathens*, who never heard of Christ, never saw his miracles, or were informed of his doctrine; how shall we escape? for he will come again as a *conqueror* and *judge*, and not as sufferer and a surety, as he came at first; and though he was *numbered with transgressors*, and made his grave with the wicked

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on TIME and ETERNITY. 115

wicked, at his first appearance ; he shall hereafter be attended with the shouts of angels, who excel in strength, and the joyful acclamations of his saints, glittering as the light, and paying homage to him as the judge of quick and dead. *He*, whom we have despised, shall then be encompassed with a dazzling glory, that will confound us. *He*, whom we have affronted, will be cloathed with a majesty that shall astonish us. *He*, whom we have offended, shall be armed with power and with wrath to punish us ; and all that continue to lift up the heel against him, shall then be made his footstool ; all that refuse to kiss the sceptre of his grace, shall be broken in pieces by his iron rod.

The holy scripture doth frequently and expressly assure us, that he will *thus* come again, and for those ends. He is exalted, and gone to heaven, *as the head of his church*, and the king of glory ; and when he foretold his ascension, he gave a promise of his return. The heavens are to contain him, till *the restitution of all things*. By his providence, and by his holy spirit, he now carries on the designs of his death : and when these are accomplished, he will appear to the joy of believers, and the confusion of the wicked. He is entered as our \* *forerunner*, within the veil to prepare mansions, and to take possession for us, and will not always leave us in this dark and defiling world. He knoweth our sorrows, and heareth our prayers, and bottles our tears, takes notice of our groans, and in all our afflictions

\* Heb. vi. 19. and x. 20.



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sistions he is afflicted. *Being reconciled by his death, at his first coming, we shall be saved by his life, since he lives to make good his word of coming again.*

How comfortable is the *news* of it? How joyful will be the *meeting* to such as expect and prepare to see him? when the sea and the graves shall yield up their dead, and all the *prisoners of hope* lift up their heads, arise, go up and meet the Lord in the air, and ascend with him to the heavenly glory. ✕ But who can express how dismal a sight this will be to the *secure*, and the *impenitent*, to all who die in their sins? to behold their *judge* (who formerly offered to be their *Saviour*) upon a glorious throne, and all the children of *Adam* summoned before his tribunal! to have nothing to answer against his charge, and no way to escape his condemning sentence! They despised him as a *lamb*, offered in sacrifice to take away the sins of the world; but shall no longer do so, when he comes as the *lion of the tribe of Judah*, to devour and destroy the enemies of his cross. ✕ Now they will not own him for their *Lord*, but shall then find he is so, by the vengeance he will execute.

As a *Jesus*, as a *Saviour* they rejected him, making light of his salvation, despising his mercy, refusing his grace; but the *neglected gospel* will then be a more *killing letter than the law*. He, who by his ambassadors, doth now intreat sinners to be reconciled, will then be as deaf to *their intreaties*, as they have been to *his*. Because they would not turn at his reproof, hearken to the call of his word, and obey

bey his voice, they must hear the sentence of condemnation, and feel the execution of it, whether they will or no; yea, the blood of his *cross* will upbraid, accuse, and plead against them. And whatsoever foolish evasions they now make to continue in security, they shall then be *speechless* and *self-condemned*. Nothing will be able to hide them from the amazing presence of their *judge*, or from the wrath of the *lamb*. He then will inflict an intolerable and righteous vengeance, an *everlasting destruction* upon the ignorant and ungodly world: The greatest, the stoutest, the boldest of them shall then be humbled, and stand before Christ's tribunal, upon an *equal level* with the meanest; seized with horror, filled with guilt, anguish and despair; and find to their eternal confusion, that the *judge is no respecter of persons, but every man shall receive according to his works*: the mighty shall not be spared for his greatness, nor the mean for his poverty. ✕

O fool! O wretch that I am! shall many then say, who now brave it out in pride and vanity, unconcerned about a future judgment! not to be persuaded by the terrors of the Lord, which I was so often warned and foretold of! What refuge of hope can I now flee to? What can I say for myself? What can I do to escape, to die, to exist no longer? I would have *no compassion* on my own soul; I would not so much as *consider* its danger! I shall now find *none* from Christ, I can expect none: his mercy is gone, and gone for ever! I am lost, undone, tormented, and must eternally be so.

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O the amazement, horror, and despair of self-condemned sinners in that day of vengeance!

O my soul! what is there of greater consequence, or of greater certainty from the word of God, than that I *must* appear to judgment when Christ shall come again? | Lord, teach me to believe it firmly, to consider it often, to lay it seriously to heart, to act under the influence and power of it, as long as I live; that at the *great resurrection* from the dead, I may lift up my head with a joyful hope, and find the judge to be my friend, my advocate, my Jesus, and not my enemy and destroyer.



S E C T. XXIII.

*Meditations of the glory of Christ in his glorified saints, and of the thankful admiration of believers, when he shall come again from heaven, which shall be continued to all eternity.*

THE terror of our Lord's appearance to judgment, cannot be greater to the wicked, than the comfort and joy of it will be to the saints. X When they shall see him whom their souls love, ascend with him to heaven, and be welcomed, according to his promise, with those endearing words\*, *Come ye blessed children of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you, from the foundation of the world.* † “ It was for your sakes I assumed  
“ flesh

\* Matth. xxv. 34.

on TIME and ETERNITY. 119

“ flesh, lived on earth, and died on the cross  
“ to purchase this glorious kingdom for you,  
“ which I now come to give you the posses-  
“ sion of : it was for this I prayed and suffe-  
“ red on earth, for *this* I interceded ever  
“ since in heaven : I was heard in that *pray-*  
“ *er*, accepted in those *sufferings*, and my  
“ *intercession* granted *that where I am you*  
“ *may be also, to behold my glory. Come there-*  
“ *fore good and faithful servants, enter into*  
“ *your Lord's joy.*” + O what ravishing words  
will these be ! what an extasy of love and  
kindness is implied in them ! what matter of  
rejoycing may it now give me, to admit the  
*hope* that my blessed Saviour will say such words  
as these to *me*, and bid me stand on his right-  
hand, among his sheep. | O what an exulting  
frame of soul will such expressions raise ! How  
shall all my doubts and fears, and sorrows be  
scattered in a moment, and cease for ever !  
O glorious day ! when my blessed Lord shall  
thus publicly acknowledge me for his own,  
and plead my cause from all the accusations  
of satan, and the malicious calumnies of all  
his instruments ! when I shall be able to say  
of all my sins and sufferings, as my Lord upon  
the cross, *It is finished, it is finished !* My  
warfare being accomplished, being more than  
conqueror over all through him that loved me,  
and died for me, and now is come to *wipe a-*  
*way all tears from mine eyes*, as it were with  
the *napkin* that was bound about his head when  
laid in the grave ; all being the fruit of his  
meritorious death. Then shall I have nothing  
more to fear, or wish or beg ; I shall offend,  
provoke



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provoke and dishonour him no more ; or by my folly and scandal, discredit his holy name and gospel ; but by *consummate holiness* be fitted to rejoice in his presence and love, and celebrate his praise for ever. \ I shall never more lament his absence, or complain of his anger ; never see a cloud on his face, or frown in his look any more. \ Now I must wait and pray, struggle and strive, labour and suffer, desire and expect, believe and hope, &c. but *then*, perfect rest and holiness, love and joy, vision and fruition, bliss and glory unutterable and everlasting shall take place. —

All the *attributes* of God, all the wonderful *perfections* of Christ will then be *glorified* in believers, and admired by them. \ His invariable truth will then be honoured, which they trusted to, and waited for ; for now they shall know, and find they did not wait in vain : they hoped in his word, and ventured their salvation upon it ; and now they shall receive the end of their faith and hope, infinitely beyond what they ever expected or believed.

The glory of *divine wisdom* will then appear, when the constitution, administration, and design of the mediator's kingdom shall be fully known in the admirable order and beauty of every part of it, with the exact tendency of all the particulars to one glorious end, and the whole undertaking crowned with so blessed an issue. \ What is now a *mystery* even to believes themselves, and hath a veil upon it, shall then no longer be so ; all the rideles of God's grace and providence shall be plainly understood.

## on TIME and ETERNITY. 121

derstood. O how transporting a view must it needs be, when the *glory* of all the *divine attributes* which God intended to accomplish in and by *Christ*, shall be manifest to his redeemed saints! the whole method of our salvation will then appear to be the fruit of *unsearchable wisdom*, when we shall all see the reality and substance, and entire scheme of all that God designed in and by him; all that was typified of him, and foretold concerning him in the Old Testament. How will it all appear to be *the manifold wisdom of God*! Ephes. iii. 10.

As in uniting heaven and earth together in the person of our moderator, fulfilling the truth of a terrible threatening in his death, and by the same way accomplishing \* many gracious promises; satisfying justice, and at the same time shewing mercy; manifesting infinite grace and kindness by shedding of blood; conquering death by dying, and disarming the law by obedience to it, &c. afterwards subduing the world to the faith of the gospel, by the foolishness of preaching; making men wise to salvation, by the knowledge of the cross; and spreading that faith the more, by all the opposition made against it, &c. How wonderfully will a clear view of these things discover, and glorify the wisdom of God! ✕

But the *love and grace of Christ*; the infinite goodness and compassion of God will then be magnified in an *especial* manner. ✕ What but *sovereign love* in the whole contrivance

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and

\* Vid. Mr. Charnock of the *divine attribute wisdom*.

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and council of God about our redemption ! What admirable love and grace in the whole management of that design ! What unparalleled kindness in the accomplishment of it, by the sacrifice of the Son of God ! And how glorious will *this love* appear, when he shall come again to give us the full harvest of all his purchase ! With what admiring thankfulness shall believers then contemplate the unsearchable riches of his grace ! In all the parts and instances of humiliation, from his conception to his crucifixion and burial ; in all the evidences and discoveries made of it, from the first promise to its completion, yea, from the foundation of the world, in the *covenant of peace* between the father and the son, until his second coming to judge the world, and deliver up the kingdom to his father.

How shall we then admire and adore his *powerful grace* which snatched us as fire-brands out of everlasting burnings ; that effectually shined into our minds by heavenly light ; conquered the opposition of our stubborn wills, sanctified our carnal hearts, rescued us from the tyranny of satan, and the dominion of lust ; giving, cherishing and preserving the holy seed of *grace*, and making it spring up to eternal life ; defeating the malicious and subtle endeavours of the devil to destroy it ; enabling us to endure tribulation, and persevere to the end ; giving us victory over *death* ; conducting us through the dark valley ; raising our bodies, reviving and re-uniting them to our souls, and rendering them glorious like his own body ; and at length rewarding our imperfect  
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on TIME and ETERNITY. 123

service with *eternal life*! Yea, though our best services were mixed with sin, our holiest duties spotted, our most couragious suffering mixed with unbelief, rewarded with a blessedness that hath no allay of evil, but all the ingredients of a *perfect felicity*, and nothing to lessen and interrupt it. How shall we then admire the *bounty* of our gracious Lord, the freeness, tenderness, riches, and the exceeding greatness and glory of his *infinite goodness* and *grace* to poor believers! —

With what extasies of joy and gratitude may we imagine that our Lord will be then admired by all his redeemed ones? ✕

Saying, *This is He* who made our peace with God, and reversed the sentence of damnation, which we were under; who bought us with the price of his most precious blood, bore the wrath of his father, and submitted to an infamous and cursed death for us. He assumed *our* nature, that we might partake of *his*; became the *son of man*, that we might be made the *children of God*: *for our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might become rich*: he stooped to bear the greatest ignominy and reproach, to confer honour on us: he was *for a time* forsaken of his father, that we might not be so *eternally*: he felt the stroke of his anger against sin, that we might not perish under it. ✕ He was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with griefs, that we might rejoice: his agonies and bloody sweat were for our refreshment, and by his stripes we are healed: he bowed his head on the cross, that we might lift up ours in triumph; and because we had



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eaten of the forbidden fruit, he hung on the accursed tree. \ It was *for us* that he suffered the frowns of heaven, the enmity of hell, the rage of devils, the hatred and persecution of the world : he was judged that we might not come into condemnation : \ he was crucified, that we might be glorified ; \ and he is now *come again*, finally and fully to effect it. —

O the *height* and *depth*, and *length*, and *breadth* of the *love of Christ*, which passeth knowledge, but calls for admiration, and everlasting gratitude ! This is the *blessed day*, we long'd and waited, and prayed for ! This is our *gracious*, our *glorious Lord*, whose love melted our heart, whose promise was our support, whose word was our rule, whose spirit was our comforter, \ whose cross was our crown, and the hope of his appearance our chief consolation ! —

*Lord !* What *am I*, what *was I*, that the ever blessed Son of God should do and suffer and purchase all this *for me* ! \ I can remember when I was ignorant of God, a stranger to him, at enmity with him, under the power of darkness, and the devil, serving divers lusts and pleasures, hastening to hell, and liable to his wrath. But he chose me out of the world, stamp'd his image upon me, pardoned my sins, and embrac'd me in the arms of his unchangeable love. O *happy change* ! \ and yet how little did I prize his grace, admire his love and express my own, or promote his glory, and honour him in the eyes of others ? How did I dishonour my profession and holy calling, as his disciple, by aggravated apostacy ?

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tacy? But he recovered me by *repentance*, and healed my *backslidings*, and received me graciously, because he loved me freely. *O admirable grace!* to pardon and save, and bring to glory such an unthankful *wretch*, as I have been! to make such a *difference* between *me* and *others*, whom I knew on earth! That the same power which makes *them* miserable, now makes *me* blessed! That when they are banish'd from his presence into everlasting destruction, I am admitted to behold his glory, and shall dwell with him for ever!

O, how much *more* do I now see and find, than ever I believed, of the love of Christ, and his promised salvation! How much *more* glorious is the person of my redeemer! How much *more* excellent is the heavenly state than ever I thought or expected! I could not have imagined the *thousandth, thousandth* part of that which I now see and feel. + I cannot but admire, and spend an *eternity* in admiring and praising the incomparable grace and glory of my blessed Redeemer. —

Such holy admiration will certainly produce the most *thankful adoration* of our Lord Jesus. Saying one to another, *O bless the Lord of love and glory!* who humbled himself so low as our Mediator, and hath exalted us so high, as the blessed fruit of it! How can we ever *enough* adore and praise him, who condescended so far, and hath done and suffer'd so much for us? See how the holy angels worship this King of glory! And have not every one of us more reason to do so? O let all the *choir* of heaven celebrate his glory.

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ous love ! and let us his redeemed, his glorified ones say continually, *Let the Lord be magnified; who hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and made us kings and priests unto God his Father, and through him ours.* —

O merciful Saviour ! O glorious change ! O happy society ! with whom we shall eternally adore our common Lord. We can some of us remember, when we lived together on earth, how we wept and prayed, and fasted and mourned together, how we suffered, and complain'd, and sinn'd together. O the marvellous change our Redeemer hath now wrought for us, and in us ! these bodies, these souls, this life, this place, this company, these enjoyments are not like those in yonder world. But *alas !* who can describe what believers shall then think, and say to extol their Saviour ! How small a portion is it we understand of that world ? How little can I conceive, and how much less express ? Blessed be God we know so much, as the matter of our joyful hopes ; and for ever blessed be God, who hath promised and provided such a glory for us, as cannot now be fully known.

What inexpressible sweetness might believers taste, by rejoicing in *hope*, did a more lively *faith* realize all this to their souls ? We might listen as it were to the shouts and acclamations of the saints above, and say *amen* to their thanksgivings. † We might behold them about the throne of God, and of the lamb, with palms of *victory* in their hands,

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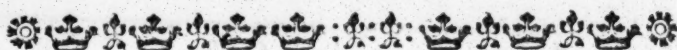
hands, a crown of *glory* on their heads, and songs of *triumph* in their mouths, saying, *allelujah*; \* *worthy art thou, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are, and were created. And worthy is the lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory and blessing. And again, blessing, honour, glory and power be unto him who sits upon the throne, and to the lamb, for ever and ever.* —

Whence is it, *O my soul!* If indeed I believe and expect all this, that I can hear and read, and think, and speak of *these great things*, with no more ardent affections, suitable preparations, importunate prayers, and vigorous desires? How should the believing thoughts of that day promote my heavenly-mindedness, self-denial, contempt of the world, patience and perseverance? Quicken my zeal, secure my steadfastness, and give life and spirit to my prayers for the hastening of it? — How should my soul rise towards *heaven*, by holy love and desire? Ascend and meet him, get as near him as I can, breathe after more of his presence, and beg him to prepossess my heart, to anticipate his second coming by clearer discoveries of love, and fuller communications of his grace? *Even so, come Lord Jesus.* —

\* Rev. 4. c. 11. 5. c. 12. 13.

SECT]





## S E C T. XXIV.

*Concerning the examination of a man's heart and life: The reasonableness, advantages and necessity of it. Some directions and advice concerning the time and manner; that we may know in what preparedness we are for eternity.*

**I** Am hastening every year, every day, to the period of this: I must *shortly* appear before my glorious Judge; and experience these terrors or comforts, this blessedness or misery, which I have now read of. Shall I not therefore enquire which of the two belongs to me? Is it not worth considering, whither I must go, and how I shall fare, when I quit this body? What is like to be my next habitation? To which of the two unchangeable states I shall be adjudg'd? Shall an enquiry of so much consequence be put off, to an indefinite hereafter? Do I not desire to know the worst, while a remedy may be found? Or am I content to die through an unwillingness to discover that I am sick? The question to be resolved is of infinite weight. Shall I not spend a few hours to know what will become of me *for ever*? An error is no more than possible, 'tis easy to mistake; and the hazard of doing so is unspeakably

ably great. How many thousands perish eternally, even under the light of the gospel, who never suspected their danger? How ordinary, how common a thing is it for men to be thus deceived! how successful is the devil in this stratagem against the souls of men! X

Is it not then a most criminal stupidity to be contentedly ignorant and unresolved, whether I am reconciled to God or no; whether I am led by the flesh or by the spirit; whether I am in the broad or narrow way, which leads to such contrary ends; that is, whether, if I die in this condition, I shall be *saved* or *perish*? Can such an *enquiry* be *frivolous* or *indifferent*? Is the *subject* of it so *contemptible*, or *my concern* in it so *small*, that it merits not to be attentively considered? Shall I never ask my soul, till I am leaving this world, (the *unfittest time* of all to begin so important an affair) *what am I? To whom do I belong? Whose image do I bear? How have I lived, and what do I do? What do I love most? What do I most constantly desire, and chuse, and seek? How doth the pulse of my soul beat? Is it quickest towards God, or towards the world? Whither am I going? What will be the final upshot and issue of my present course? Is it heaven or hell I must be translated to by dying? What security have I got for eternal life? What provisions have I made? What foundation have I laid?* —

How strangely infatuated are most men, who talk of an *everlasting life*, as an article of their creed, and say they count upon it, that they must dwell in *happiness* or *misery* for  
ever;

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*ever*; and seldom or never bethink themselves in good earnest, and for any time with a settled composed exercise of thoughts, which of these *two* is like to be their lot. Or if they begin to search and try themselves, they come to no *conclusion*, or conclude too hastily; they pluck of the plaister as soon as it begins to smart; they are either frightened with the horrid prospect of past crimes, or, having escap'd the grosser pollutions of the world, judge too favourable of their own case. They commonly do the work but by halves, and so go from the glass, and forget what manner of persons they were. ✕

Let me therefore, *O my soul!* Sequester my self from the world, to commune with my own heart, to reflect upon my past life and look into my present state, to recollect and review the most considerable passages of my course and time hitherto. O how neglected and disused a practice is this, which doth challenge and require our principal and most serious concerns about it! And how many begin it, and are discouraged, and leave off, without reaching the end of such an enquiry? ✕

How much *wiser* in this respect are the children of this world in their generation, than the children of light? Who is so exact in his *accounts* between God and his own soul, as *tradesmen* in their dealings with one another? Who is at the pains to write down his *sins* and his *mercies*? the grounds of his fear, and the *encouragements* of his hope? Or keeps a *journal* and *diary* of his *spiritual state*?  
Who

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Who doth, at set times, once a *month*, or once a *quarter*, or even once a *year*, take a just view of himself, his heart, and life, and state, as a *christian*; that he may see what he hath received and done, what he owes, and what he may expect; that he may know whether he *thrive* or *decays*; whether he *increase* or *decrease*, whether he go *backward* or *forward*; whether he be *richer* or *poorer* this year than the last? And is it not a *symptom* that you are *declining*, when you love not to examine your accounts? Is there not ground of *jealousy* and *suspicion*, that you are *behind-hand* because you are loth to enquire, whether you are or no; and unwilling to know the worst of your condition? Nevertheless, without such *enquiries*, and bringing the matter to a *determination*, at what uncertainties must we live? And how unconceivable an hazard do all hypocrites and unrenewed sinners run? And how reasonable, how necessary is it that we should know, and in order to it, prove ourselves? We must therefore bestow time and serious diligence about it, that we may examine matters to the bottom, and come to some result; so that we may form a right judgment concerning our own case.

He that would do it to good purpose, must endeavour to understand clearly the terms of the *covenant* on God's part, and on ours: And take care not to judge of himself by mistaken rules; by a false standard that God will not justify; or by any such characters as will not conclude. But most men are *unwilling* to bring themselves to a *trial*, or to  
let



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let conscience deal plainly and faithfully with them. They are stupidly secure, and see not the necessity of this duty: or do not suspect themselves. They presume they need not be at that trouble: or are so taken up with the world, that they cannot find *time* and leisure for it. And many men dare not bring their hearts and ways to a trial. There is commonly some *secret lust* indulg'd, which they are loth to let go. But most go on in sin, and perish eternally, because they think there is no danger of perishing; and never repent, and make their peace with God, because they fancy, and presume 'tis done already. ✕

Therefore let me beg of thee, *whoever thou art*, who readest this, to put the case to thy self, seriously to admit the doubt, whether you are not mistaken; make the *supposition*, that you have not hitherto sufficiently considered the state of your soul. You are confident that *all is well*; and thereupon are unwilling to examine farther: But for that very reason you ought to question, whether it be so or not? Do but ask your self seriously, what is the *ground* of your good opinion concerning your self? For what reason can you thus conclude?

Did you ever seriously lay to heart the *characters* and description which the scriptures give of those whom Christ will own at the last day; and of such whom he will reject and reprobate? With unfeigned application to *your own case*, have you therewith prov'd your selves? And come to a settled judgment, a deliberate enquiry? And was the *conclusion* to your comfort and joy? If so, what influence hath

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hath it since had upon your heart and life? Hath it promoted purity, thankfulness, heavenly-mindedness, contempt of this world, and stronger desires after the image, love, and presence of God, and the glory of Christ? Moreover consider,

Is not this a good while ago? How have you behaved your self ever since? Have you not reason to look back with shame? If you but *slightly* examin'd your self formerly, resolve to do it more effectually now: review the sins you have been since guilty of; and if you have not done any thing considerable of this kind, you ought *now* to begin. It is seasonable to begin the year by such an exercise; and it will be found of great use, in all the following parts of it: especially when you come to examine your self afresh in order to the *Lord's supper*. For we ought frequently to renew the sad remembrance of our sins; that from time to time we may renew our *repentance*, which is the work of our life, and not of one day. And he that comes to the sacrament, and will look no farther back than to the last communion, may possibly presume too much, that all was then as it should be, and not be humble enough.

If any one therefore resolve in good earnest upon an holy life and seriously design to prepare for *eternity*, as it is necessary to make a general review of his life, so I desire to afford him the best counsel I can, in order to it.

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It may be advisable, (a) if you have not formerly begun this work, to employ one hour at least in a day, for several days following, in *writing down* the most considerable passages of your life you can remember, desiring God's assistance therein; and keeping your eye upon your end, in the whole; that is, thinking seriously that 'tis in order to *eternity* that you now examine your self. Choose a place of retirement, and the most convenient time, that you may not be interrupted, and when your heart is most serious. Every man may divide his life into several parts, as from *infancy* till he left off going to school, or was bound apprentice, or settled in any way of education. From thence, till fix'd in some employment. If a married person, till entred into that condition. And from thence to another remarkable period, or to the present time. It may better assist some persons memory, to consider the several *places* of their abode, and compute according to them. In each portion of time, recollect what *sins* you were most addicted to: in what instances, with what frequency, and with what other various aggravations you committed them: And what have been the *effects* and consequences of those *sins*, to your selves, and others, in order to repentance, and godly sorrow. Which must not be judged of by tears, but grief, and inward hatred of sin. Remembering that no man is the better meerly for being examin'd, if there follows nothing after it. 'Tis in order to a *judgment* to be pass'd upon

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(a) Vid. Mr. Baxter's *saints rest*. p. 3. Ch. 7, 8, 9

## on TIME and ETERNITY. 135

our selves. 'Tis to search out *our own iniquity*, our beloved sin, in order to the mortification of it. That *Goliath* must first be slain, if ever the other *Philistines* are conquered. In some it is pride, in others worldliness, in some uncleanness, in others drunkenness, gluttony, &c. That you may discover it, observe, what sin 'tis you are most unwilling to part with; which you could even wish were not forbidden.

Which you have formerly been most apt to plead for, to extenuate, or excuse and hide.

The thoughts whereof do most frequently occur; especially when *alone*: First, in the morning, and last at night: and are most distracting in prayer and worship.

Which an awaken'd conscience hath most plainly told you of; under a sermon, or at a sacrament, or under some heavy affliction, or on a sick-bed, &c.

Which you can least bear to be reprov'd for.

Which the temperament of your body doth most incline to.

Which your calling, employment, company, and converse, administer the greatest temptations, for.

That especially which hath the throne of the heart, and sets all the faculties a work, to contrive fuel and opportunities for its gratification.

Observe likewise what *passion* was most predominant in each period of time, or is yet so; and what ill effects it hath produced. Consider farther what dangerous *temptations* you have met with; how you have fallen by them, or



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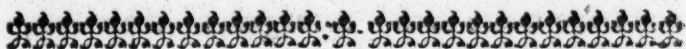
been enabled to resist. \ Consider withal the *time*, and the *means*, whereby God hath at any time formerly awaken'd, convinc'd, and humbled you ; what purposes of amendment, and promises of reformation you have ever made ; and how far you have, or have not perform'd them. Recollect likewise all the *special mercies* you have receiv'd from God in every state and period of your life, in order to thankfulness. \ The last section of these papers may give you some assistance therein, and consider what returns you have made to God, for all his kindness.

You may do well to consider your self also, in the *relations* you have stood to others ; as *inferior*, *equal*, or *superior* ; in family, church, or state ; in your calling, profession employment, &c. \ And examine in what *more notorious* instances you have been faulty in your relative duties. How you did ordinarily carry it in your place and station ; for that is the best, the truest picture of a man, which is like him in his ordinary, every day's habit. \ Particularly reflect upon the sins you have committed in *company* with others. By whose *example* you have been drawn to sin ; who may probably have been tempted by yours, and bewail it ; and if the persons a.e living, admonish them to *repent* ; and if you have injur'd and wrong'd any, acknowledge your fault, and to the utmost of your power, make speedy restitution. ✕ If any of your *companions* in sin are dead, and you fear died without repentance ; humble your self particularly before God, for having contri-  
buted

## on TIME and ETERNITY. 137

buted to their damnation. I know of some who have made such a *catalogue* of their sins, with the most observable aggravations of them; which they constantly preserv'd, and frequently review'd to keep them humble, penitent, watchful and thankful; and on some occasions of secret humiliation have spread them before the Lord (as *Hezekiah* did the writing of his enemy) covering themselves with shame and confusion of face, by considering what they have been, and thence admiring the riches of free grace, in the forgiveness of such crimes, thro' the blood of Christ.

*Examine me, O Lord, and prove me; try my reins and my heart, for thy loving kindness is before mine eyes, and I will walk in thy truth. Thou hast searched me, O Lord, and known me; Thou knowest my thoughts afar off; all my secret sins are in the light of thy countenance; and thou art acquainted with all my ways. Set my sins in order before me, that I may repent and forsake them. Shew me mine infirmities and wickedness, that I may watch against them. And teach me to judge and condemn my self, that I may not be judged of the Lord, or condemned with the world.*



## S E C T. XXV.

*How christians ought to examine their decays of grace and piety. The greatness of their sin, and of their loss under such a declension: God's displeasure, and departure from them considered, to awaken endeavours of a recovery. In what manner the faith of adherence may be acted by one who hath no assurance.*

**I**T cannot but be of use to *believers* also, at stated times to examine themselves, concerning their languishings and decays in grace, falling from their first love to a spirit of indifferency and lukewarmness, disorderly walking or unfruitfulness; whether *grey hairs are not here and there upon them, and they know it not.* \ For God may withdraw by degrees, so that his departure may not presently be perceiv'd. \ And some kind of activity in duty may be continued upon false principles, and from common assistance, while a christian, as to his spiritual state, may be under a dangerous consumption. \ 'Tis not difficult for others to observe it sometimes, and would be visible enough to themselves, would they spare a few hours to examine the matter. \ The punishment of such back-slidings, the loss of the quickning and comforting presence of the ho-

ly

ly spirit, deserves likewise to be enquir'd into, in order to a speedy remedy, and should enforce the counsel.

I mean not barely the ebbing of *affections* in the duties of religion, or the want of life, and quickning from *sensible consolations*, which new converts, (especially such as have been reclaim'd from a course of notorius impiety) have more at first than afterwards. † This *doubting christians* should particularly take notice of, by the instance of the *prodigal*, who was extraordinarily feasted at his first return, but was doubtless contented afterwards with the ordinary provisions of his father's house. Neither doth God dispense the same measure to *all alike*, nor to *any alike at all times*: some who are called to greater services and sufferings than others, or had greater conflicts before conversion, may have a greater share than the rest of their brethren. Neither will the *same degree* of grace imparted to *some* persons, so discernably move and comfort, as it will do some others of a different temper. 'Tis not therefore so much to be the matter of our enquiry, (if at all it need to be so) whether we have more or less of sensible joy, in the performance of duty. But,

Whether we are **not** fallen and declin'd, *as to the inward vital acts of grace, and in the outward fruits of holiness.* Whether we have such clear convincing apprehensions of divine and spiritual truths, and the mysteries of the gospel, as formerly; whether our minds are not become more vain and heedless; whether our knowledge of God, and of the revelations  
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of his will, be as powerful and efficacious upon our hearts and lives, as heretofore; whether there be not less frequency, less constancy, less inward satisfaction in holy serious thoughts than formerly. You were wont to pray and endeavour, that God might be *first* and *last* in your thoughts every day, and by frequent ejaculations in civil affairs, to maintain a daily converse with God; but now you mind not whether it be so or not; yea, you cannot but know, that it is not thus with you still. It was once your burden to be pester'd with foolish, filthy, worldly, vain thoughts, especially on the *Lord's day*, or in the worship of God; you rejected and disown'd them, you lamented and pray'd against them; do so much as examine, whether it be thus still. ✓

Consider all your *affections*, and their several objects; and see whether a criminal lukewarmness hath not diffus'd it self into every one of them. Examine every *grace*; and see whether your faith, hope, love, holy desires, and delight in God be not miserably abated; as to the strength and vigor, the efficacy and frequent exercise of every one of them; so that your thoughts of God are few, cold, and lifeless, without desire, delight, and love. ✕

Consider the *opportunities of publick worship*, and solemn occasions of approaching the *divine presence*: are they as much the desire of your souls, and the rejoycing of your hearts, as once they were? Are you not more easily diverted from them, less satisfy'd and refresh'd by them? Are not all gospel-ordinances less powerful and quickning, and your profit and advantage

## on TIME and ETERNITY. 141

advantage thereby unspeakably less than formerly? Do you hunger and thirst, and pant as the hart after the water-brooks, to draw nigh to God, and come into his courts? Do you make conscience of preparing beforehand? Do you come with a real desire and design, and expectation of profiting, and bettering your spirits? Do you joyn in every part of divine worship with that attention, seriousness, and composure of mind, and taste the sweetness and benefit of such solemnities, as formerly? Are such services perform'd with that awe of God, with that humility, fervency, and intenseness of spirit, as sometimes they were? Are you not more negligent and unconcern'd before and after, whether you find any thing of this or no? Tho' your desires are weak, your heart flat, your thoughts wandring, your spirits trifling, so the work be done, and the duty be over, (in how formal, customary, and careless a manner, soever it be) you consider it not, you lay it not to heart, you reflect not upon it, you bewail it not: or at least are better contented, and sooner quieted, and take less notice of the frame of your heart in such duties than formerly.

Examine farther, how 'tis with you as to the great *distinguishing duties* of an upright christian, (if performed as they ought to be) I mean *secret prayer and meditation*: Are you as strict and careful, constant and conscientious, frequent and abundant in these, as formerly? May not our closets and places of retirement witness against us? How seldom are we there? How quickly are we gone? How easily

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easily diverted? How soon tired? How do we trifle in that work, and shuffle it over and take up with the shadow and image of prayer? Our former humble and importunate prayers, joyful thanksgivings, and sweet contemplation of the mysteries of religion, compared with our present daily practice, will testify that we are declin'd and fallen.

Moreover consider *the evil of sin*, and how your heart stands affected to it. Is not your hatred of sin, and zeal against it much decay'd? especially with respect to inward *spiritual sins*, such as the secret workings of unbelief, and distrust, pride, envy, uncharitableness, &c? Do you bewail it, strive against it, and shun the occasions, and fear the temptations that may lead you into sin, as once you did? Have you lost much of that tenderness, and holy jealousy over your heart and ways you formerly had? Do you not now make more bold with temptation? Are you not oftner conquered? And with less reluctance? And by smaller temptations, &c?

Are you not more *unserviceable*? Root and fruit in a withering condition? God less honour'd, and others less profited and edified by your example and life? Do you not adhere more to the world? Conform to it, and comply with it in many things which formerly you durst not have done? And are every day waxing worse? Make a pause awhile, and bethink your self what this will come to at last, when even the little good that remains, is ready to die.

May

on TIME and ETERNITY. 143

May I not ask *such christians*, or desire them to ask themselves; What is already the effect and consequence of this declension? Is not God's spirit removed, and the light of his countenance eclipsed? Yea, as to many of them, are they not under sad apprehensions of God's displeasure? Do they not feel the terrors of the Lord? Do they not walk heavily from day to day? They that could once converse with God on all occasions as a *friend*, and a *father*, do now think of God, and are troubled: thick darkness doth encompass them round about. They have lost the sense of his love, the comforts of his presence, and their song in the night, and see no relief. This is a more hopeful case however than *theirs*, who are under great back-sliding and desertion, and hardly sensible of it. To awaken and assist both; consider I beseech you, *when you are fallen*, and, what you have lost, and what will be the issue of this, if sickness or smart affliction overtake you, or if you should die in this condition. And enquire *seriously* and presently into the *cause* of all this evil: for a few transient thoughts will not affect the heart, and persuade to action. And do it *presently*; because by every delay your work will be the harder, your danger the greater, and your recovery the more difficult. Reflect upon the *sinfulness*, as well as *affliction* of this case. Know that you have displeased God, and run from him, neglected his presence, and griev'd his spirit, and in what instances you have done so, that hath made him weary of his dwelling; what ordinances you have slighted;



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ted; what duties you have omitted; what sins you have given way to; in order to *repentance* and deep humiliation. ✕

Can you *contentedly* sit still with this dismal state of things? While *God hath somewhat* (yea a great deal indeed) *against you for having left your first love?* Will you not endeavour to remove that which had made such a separation between God and you, and brought you thus low? What communion with God, what communication of his grace, what influences of his spirit, and evidences of his favour have you lost? And will you not acknowledge your iniquity, and abase your selves in the dust, and return to the Lord, and do your first works? That he may heal your back-slidings, and receive you graciously; that you may again take hold of his *covenant*, and be at peace with him?

But to be at peace with God is not the whole of your concern; you need not only a pardon, but a *physician* to heal you; as doth a malefactor, that is not only liable to the law, but desperately sick. Your state is *sinful*, and dangerous, as well as *troublesome*. From performing duties in such a manner as you now do, you may quickly be tempted to let them altogether alone. God may be so far provoked to suffer satan to make attempts upon you of that kind: (and he is forward enough to make use of such an opportunity, to try all his snares and stratagems against you) till he prevail with you, to think hardly of God himself, \* unthankfully to over look all his former

\* Vid. Mr. Gilpin, of *Temptation*, part 2. chap. 6.

former kindnesses, to put the worst interpretation that can be upon all his providences, to distrust and quarrel with him, as if his faithfulness had failed, and his mercy were clean gone for ever, and there were no hope left for one in your case; and so run into *desperation*, and, thro' the subtilty and violence of satan's temptations, try the most foolish and unlawful means for ease and cure; either open licentiousness, or it may be self-murder.

Therefore speedy, present *repentance* is necessary to find out, and mortify *every corruption*, and *that* especially, which conscience tells us, you have most indulg'd; from whence your distress doth principally arise: confessing your sin freely, fully, and without reserve, and waiting on God in the diligent use of all means, for the recovery of that which you have lost; and justifying God in his righteousness, truth, wisdom, holiness, in all his rebukes. That you may regain a spirit of prayer, and taste the sweetness, virtue, and efficacy of every duty, and every ordinance; and God may give you *the garments of praise for the spirit of heaviness, and the joy of the Lord may be your strength*, for the future service and suffering.—

In the mean time, do not cast away your *hope*, but tho' you have (too justly) deprived your self of the *faith of assurance*, yet endeavour to maintain and exercise the *faith of adherence* (a); say unto God, that *because there is forgiveness with him, therefore he is to be feared*. My sin is not too great to be forgiven.

N

en.

(a) Vid. Dr. Owen on Ps. 130. 2.

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en. 'Tis not the *unpardonable sin*: for I desire to repent, and am resolv'd to return. I will still cleave to the Lord, and wait upon him, and follow hard after him, and take no other course for deliverance and comfort. Mine is not a single case: I am not the only soul that hath been so distressed, and yet found relief by seeking unto God. 'Tis therefore *good for me to hope, and quietly wait for the salvation of God (b)*. I will draw near to God; I will lie at his foot; and continue in all ways of worship and duty, wherein I may hope to meet with the quickning and comfort of his spirit: I will seek relief from no other; I will keep as near him as I can; whither else shall I go? *He alone hath the words of eternal life*; he alone *can create* (what is the fruit of his own lips) *peace*.—

\* I will encourage my self in the consideration of his general grace, and the probabilities of his special love: I will recollect my former experiences, when I had some *good hope through grace* concerning my adoption: *I will remember the years of the right hand of the most high*. If God will give me so much grace as to continue waiting,† I will hope still: and *tho' I walk in darkness, and see little or no light,† I will stay my self on the Lord*. And if by the want of *sensible* consolation, he will make me more humble,† and keep me in a greater submission to his will, I will bless his holy name, and derive more comfortable hope from thence, than from the most

(b) *Lam.* 3. 26.

\* *Vid. Mr. Baxter's method for peace of conscience.*

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most sweet and sensible consolations I ever had; and look upon humility, self-denial, dependance on God, resignation to him, and hatred of sin, as a better sign of his *love*, than the highest fervors of affection in his service can be.

Oh that I had formerly done as much for *holiness*, as I have for *comfort*! by the enjoyment of the one, I should have had more of the *other*: the exercise of grace would have discover'd the *truth* of it. Let me therefore accuse and condemn my self; but still trust, and love God, and wait upon him. Let me resolve never to chuse a new lord or master; or take up with any portion beneath God himself; or any way of hope or salvation but by Jesus Christ, my only Saviour; neither let me forsake the way of faith and holiness, for all the hopes and happiness of this world, if put to my choice: but be always able to say, (blessed be God I now can) that *I will return to my former husband, for then it was better with me than now.* I had peace and refreshment in my former ways, I will return to them.

*Lord, forsake me not utterly! keep not thine anger for ever: cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy holy spirit from me: restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, that my heart may be enlarged to praise thy name, and to run the way of thy commandments.*





## S E C T. XXVI.

*Confession of sin, humiliation, and repentance must follow upon self-examination. Advice concerning repentance of some particular back-sliding. The great perplexity and distress of a penitent sinner represented, as a caution against returning to folly.*

**T**HAT we may turn unto the Lord, is the end of searching and trying our ways. Lord! I have been searching my heart, and considering my ways, but can find little or no good; neither can I discover all that is evil in both. But I find enough to make my own heart condemn me, and thou, (*who art greater than my heart, and knowest all things,*) may'st much more condemn me. I am altogether unclean, polluted and abominable.

If I go about to enumerate the sins of my thoughts, words, and actions, in all the periods of my life hitherto; if I consider my omissions of duty, and daily crimes by actual commission; if I reflect upon my sins according to their respective objects, as either against thee, O God, and against my neighbour, and against my own soul or body; and compare my heart and life with thy strict and holy law, and think in how many instances I have

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have transgress'd *every* of thy righteous commands: I find they are more than the hairs on my head, they cannot be number'd. *Who can tell how oft he hath offended?* Many of my sins make little impression on my *memory*, (I observe them not, I remember them not:) but this hinders not but they may make deep impression on my *conscience*, which will one day be awake, and set them in order before me; and they are all written in *thy book* of remembrance, in order to my final judgment. *All my sins are before thee:* but thou requirest my humble *confession* of them, in order to repentance; and as a part thereof, that I freely acknowledge their heinous aggravations to shame and humble my self the more before thee whom I have offended and provok'd. —

How long did I serve divers lusts and pleasures with the neglect and forgetfulness of God? How sad a prospect may I take of the far *greatest* part of my life past? especially of my *younger years*, which have been trifled away in vanity and folly? And since I have known the way of truth, how shamefully have I prevaricated with God? I am confounded to consider how often I have despised the commandment, and rebelled against the light; against the principles of education, and the checks of conscience, frequent warnings from God, and reproofs from others; contrary to my profession and experience, contrary to the obligation of peculiar mercies, solemn promises, resolutions, and engagements, and a nearer relation to God than many others; which

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sins have *more* dishonour'd the Lord, discredited his holy gospel, gratify'd the devil, scandaliz'd the word, and strengthen'd the hands of the ungodly, than the sins of others. And *alas!* How much of my precious time is *thus* gone, which if duly improv'd, would *now* afford me comfort to review.

How much guilt have I contracted *every* year, particularly in *this* last? I now begin *another*, which will soon be gone, as that which was concluded yesterday. And shall I only advance in age to encrease the number of my sins, and heighten my account against the day of reckoning? In temporal and civil affairs, *Day unto day uttereth knowledge, and night unto night teacheth wisdom.* We are taught by *experience* many useful lessons, which we should not else have learn'd; to reform many errors and mistakes, to correct many rash and foolish actions, and speeches, &c. And shall I not learn wisdom by the *experience* of another year, in what concerns my greatest, my eternal interest? Shall not the reflection on my past sins, prevent my commission of the like? Especially considering how my sins are aggravated by every *mercy* I have received; by every *affliction* I have undergone; every awakening *sermon* I have heard; every motion of *God's spirit*, and every check of my own *conscience* that I have resisted; every offer of his *grace*; every warning of his *providence*; every invitation and call of his *word*; every *purpose* to repent, and every *resolution* I have made to forsake sin: the greater *knowledge* I have had of my danger,

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ger, the longer time I have *deliberated* about it; the oftner I have *confess'd* my sin and been sorry for it; every *reproof* I have had from others, and every *promise* I have made my self, doth aggravate, and encrease my guilt.

How many years hath God vouchsafed me to work out my salvation? But how little have I done towards it? Had I died this last year, how unprepar'd must I have made my appearance before his tribunal? What opportunities of doing, and receiving good have I let slip? Have I not made it more my business to *seem* religious, than really to *be* so? How much of the patience of God have I abus'd? Refusing his calls to repentance, resisting the strivings of his spirit, smothering my convictions, and turning the grace of God into *wantonness*? Instead of returning gratitude for all his love, I have repeated my transgressions after forgiveness; and gone in a circle of repenting and sinning, even to this day. Lord, I am ashamed, and lay my self in the dust before thee. To me belongs nothing but shame and confusion of face. If God should condemn and punish me as a rebel and a traitor, and give me the portion of hypocrites, I cannot but own his *justice*; even in hell I must do it, with my flaming tongue and breath. ✕

O spare me for thy mercy's sake! *Enter not into judgment with thy servant, for in thy sight shall no flesh living be justified; if thou lay judgment to the line, and equity to the plummet: give me repentance unto life, never to be repented of, never to be retract-*  
ed



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ed again. Bring me to the *blood of Jesus*, which cleanseeth from *all sin*. Behold the sighings of a contrite spirit. For *I acknowledge my transgressions unto thee, against whom I have sinned: O Lord, forgive the iniquity of my sin*. I am unworthy to lift up my hands and eyes towards heaven, unworthy to be called thy son, or thy servant: I am vile in mine own eyes, because I have made my self vile in thine. For this I am troubled, and mourn, and my soul is grieved within me.

O thou *heavenly physician* of souls! from thy pity alone I expect my cure. I am miserable and undone without thy compassion; and expect no relief but from the treasure of thy grace. I must perish and sink under the burden of sin, if thy merciful hand do not save me, and lift me up. I am entangled and ensnar'd by the devil and my lusts, and without thy succour can never hope to get free. *O Lord, forgive my sin, and heal my soul: deliver and save me for thy mercies sake.*

May I not yet *hope in thy mercy*? Thou hast mercifully born with me hitherto; thou callest me to repent; thou commandest me to return, and promisest to forgive those sins which are confessed and forsaken: O do not cast me out of thy sight and presence, now I desire, from the bottom of my heart, to return to thee! *I abhor my self in dust and ashes*, for my past iniquities. But *alas!* such is the hardness of my impenitent heart, that I am even ashamed of my humblest repentance:

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## on TIME and ETERNITY. 153

tance: How much more may God despise and reject it? But hast thou not given thy blessed Son to die for sinners; and exalted him to this very end, to be a prince and a saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins? And by the word of thy grace, thou beseechest all (even the greatest sinners) to accept of mercy; and art more willing to pardon, than we can be to repent. 'Tis thy delight and glory, agreeable to thy nature, and declared name, as a God gracious and merciful, slow to anger; and of great kindness, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin. O pardon mine iniquity, for it is great; and receive an humble penitent, who implores thy grace, according to the tenor of thy new covenant, flying to the arms of thy mercy, through the merits of Jesus Christ, who is able to save to the uttermost, all that come unto God by him. —

Lord, hear my prayer, and let not the mixture of my weaknesses and unworthiness turn it into sin: but graciously vouchsafe to look upon a returning prodigal; and cause me to hear the voice of joy and gladness, that my sorrowful heart may be comforted, and my life be directed to thy praise. Lead me into the path of life, that I may no longer err from the way of thy commandments: teach me to do thy will, O God, and write thy law upon my heart, that I may never more return to folly. I am convinc'd of the evil of sin, of thy right to govern me, of the equity and justice of thy law, of the sweetness and rewards of keep-  
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ing thy precepts: O sanctify my heart, and make me *sound in thy statutes*; that I may hate every false way, and be devoted to thy fear, the remainder of my life. —

If there be any *particular lust*, or wickedness, which thro' the power of temptation, and the deceitfulness of sin, you have fallen into, that hath wasted conscience, and robb'd you of your peace, and provok'd God to write *bitter things* against you; be sure to humble your self without delay, in an especial manner, for *that* back-sliding: confess it freely, with its aggravations. Consider whether it was not after some special warning, some strong conviction, under or soon after some great affliction from God, or some more than ordinary kindness of his providence, &c. And impress such thoughts, to humble your self the lower. Search into the grounds and causes of such apostacy, such as the abatement of your watchfulness, the neglect of serious closet-devotion, making bold with temptation, too great compliance with vain company, venturing too far in lawful or different things, too much confidence in your own wisdom, strength, and steadfastness, not fearing sufficiently the approaches and beginnings of sin, or avoiding the fuel, incentives, and occasions of it, &c. Palliate and disguise nothing, that may make your sin exceeding sinful, *lest* by some little art of the devil, you deceive your self, by an half-repentance; and the *evil spirit* you think to be cast out, return again with *seven* worse than himself, and so your latter

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## on TIME and ETERNITY. 155

end be worse than your beginning. For if the sin be not truly hated, but only cover'd over with penitential ashes, it will quickly flame out again, when it meets with combustible matter, and a strong blast of temptation.

But if you are griev'd to the very heart, and abhor the sin, and resolve to quit it, you need not doubt of God's readiness to receive you to mercy. His spirit is yet striving with you, if you are willing to repent and return to God. He sought you, and call'd you to return, when you were wandring as a lost sheep in the broad way: and can you think he will not be found of you, if you seek him with your whole heart? Therefore *renew your repentance*, and beg more earnestly a spirit of humility, holy fear and watchfulness: and every morning implore divine succours against that sin, and all *temptations* to it, (*which as much as possible you must avoid.*) Constant and fervent *prayer* after repentance must be your refuge, and your remedy. If you let fall your hands, this *Amaleck* will prevail again. As soon and as far as you fail in the constancy, and fervency of that *duty*, your sin will get strength, and successfully attempt you another time. But by this practice God may turn evil to work for good, make you gain by your loss, stand the faster by your falls, and become stronger by the discovery of your weakness, and so be better establish'd for the future.

But take heed that you pervert not the *grace* of God, and encourage your self to  
sin



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sin again by the *supposition*, that if you should *fall*, 'tis but to *repent*, and renew your *resolutions*, and all will be well. \ This is a subtle artifice of satan, but such, methinks, as should take with none, who have ever known by *experience*, what it is to *repent*. Who have felt the burden of sin to be heavier than a \* *Milstone*; than the weight of a *mountain*. Who have tasted, *how evil and bitter a thing it is to depart from God*. Who have loathed and abhorr'd themselves with deep remorse, and sorrow, and anguish of spirit; wishing with all their hearts, that they had not sinn'd; and if it were in their power, would give all the world to retrieve it; and would rather die, than commit that folly *again*, they then repented of. Let those who have not their *own* experience to confirm this, read over (and consider the case of *David*, when he wrote) the penitential psalms. How many, like him, have roared, and cried out under the sense of sin, of stings and furies in their conscience, of the poison'd arrows in their souls, and his terrors surrounding them wherever they went; from the sense of his sins malignity, the apprehensions of God's anger, and the consequent fears of his wrath. *Serious repentance* after great transgressions, is *another thing* than most imagine it. When their aggravated sins shall beset them behind and before, be placed in order before their eyes, and set in array against them. 'Tis always a work of *difficulty*, as well as importance, to crucify corrupt affections, to tear a beloved lust from — the

\* Luke 23. 30. &amp; 17. 2.

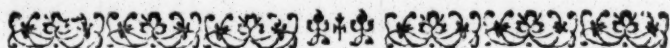
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the heart, with self-indignation to abhor and cast away what before you lov'd and delighted in. How did *David's sin* stare him in the face? *It is continually with me, it is ever before me*, said he. It haunted him like a spectre, or like *Belsazzar's* hand-writing on the wall it still appeared before him in some horrid shape.

However *sin* may smile in its first address, and bespeak us in flattering language, and promise pleasure, and profit, and great advantages and satisfaction; these are but fair appearances; this is but the *outside* of the cup, and colour of the liquor; it will prove gall and wormwood, and a mixture of deadly poison, if ever God set it home upon the conscience, and awaken us to a true sense of it. And the continuance of *daily repentance* for sin, which all christians are called to, is no such easy matter neither. Constant self-abasement, and humiliation before God, from a sense of his majesty and holiness, and of our many sins and pollution thereby: the imperfection of our best duties continually to be bewailed; inordinate affections to be still mortified; always resisting and opposing sin, in its root and branches; conflicting against the whole interest of the flesh, the world, and the devil; seeking after new holiness, to be derived unto us by the grace of Christ, to be wrought in us by his spirit, and maintained by his power; and making daily applications to the *fountain* of all grace, for spiritual strength, to continue our warfare against sin, in all instances of outward duty, and inward actings of grace, even

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as long as we live ; all this included in it. Due apprehensions concerning *repentance*, (as so comprehensive and difficult a duty,) would teach us to beware of *sin*.



## S E C T. XXVII.

*The necessity of christian resolution to upright, persevering obedience ; how full and extensive it ought to be, and yet humble ; by what means we may be assisted to perform that which we resolve.*

**H**A V I N G acknowledged my transgressions unto God, and begged forgiveness, and experimentally learned the *evil of sin*, by the bitterness of repentance, *I resolve* for the future, to watch against it more narrowly, and against every thing that leads to it ; endeavouring to please and honour my God and Saviour, by an upright, obedient heart and life. And for the remission of my former contracted guilt, I trust to *Jesus Christ*, according to the revelation made in the gospel, of what he is, hath done and suffered, and continues to do in heaven, for the salvation of repenting sinners, who desire to come unto God by him.

But how often, *O my soul !* have I mocked God, and deceived myself, with formal and faint purposes of amendment ? My good resolutions have been all of them *as the morning cloud,*

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## on TIME and ETERNITY. 159

*cloud, and the early dew, which quickly passed away.* One fresh assault of temptation hath swept away all my good purposes as a spider's web. I have falsified so many, and broke my word so often, that I dare not trust to any thing I now resolve, or rely on any promises I should farther make. Succour me therefore, O Lord, by thy powerful grace, that what was defective in former fruitless resolutions, may be now rectified. ¶ Let me be more humble in the sense of my weakness, more dependant on thy grace, and more heartily seek it from time to time. ✕ *Strengthen me with strength in my soul, with might and power in my inward man, that I may so resolve and purpose as to perform ; that I may not be one day hot, and the next cold ; zealous in the Beginning, but faint and lukewarm in the progress ; fervent and serious only in resolving, but weak and impotent in the execution.* —

Having changed my *master*, my *end*, and my *hopes*, by returning unto God, from whom I had gone astray, I firmly *resolve*, through the assistance of his grace, to change my course of life ; that old things being done away, all things may become new ; that \* *being made free from sin*, by pardoning mercy, and *become the servants of Christ*, I may have my *fruit unto holiness*, that my *end may be eternal life*. In the *interim*, whether I live or die, let it be unto the Lord, resolving both in life and death to be absolutely his. ✕ And to that purpose, O my soul ! Let me seek for continual supplies of grace from Christ my head,

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to



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to enable me to yield ready obedience in the most difficult, hazardous, painful and humbling duties. In vain do I resolve it, without the assistance of his mighty power, to strengthen my heart and hands, whenever I am called to such a trial of my sincerity. Without it I shall never recover my liberty, or break asunder those bonds and cords wherewith I have formerly been held captive, as the servant of sin and satan. Such is the weakness and treachery of my own heart, the influence of ill examples, and the subtlety and cunning of the tempter, that otherwise I shall quickly change my mind, and *return to folly, as the dog to his vomit.* The spirit is so weak, and the flesh so frail; the snares of the world so many, the power of remaining corruption so strong; and of myself I am so unsettled and wavering, fickle and unsteady, and prone to back-sliding, that all my strongest purposes will not be sufficient, without daily strength from above. My senses are so deceitful; my passions so ungovernable; the rule and law I am to walk by, so strict, and spiritual, and extensive: criminal omissions may be so frequent, and so easily overlooked; so many several and difficult duties are to be performed; and by every change of my condition, or of God's providence, so many new dangers and new duties may arise, that I fear the issue of my firmest resolutions. So strict a watch must always be kept; such humility and caution is every where to be practised; such speedy repentance required after every fall; with thankfulness and contentment in every state, under all calamities, (be they

they never so many, or never so pinching) ; and perseverance herein absolutely necessary, though never so many stratagems be used to discourage me from proceeding, or to entice me to go back, or turn aside to some other path ; insomuch that if God had not promised me his continued presence, and that his *grace shall be sufficient for me, and that I shall not be tempted above what I am able to bear* ; I should utterly despair of making good what I now resolve.

But besides these *promises* to encourage my resolved obedience, he hath left upon record in his word, many glorious *examples* of assisting and rewarding the courage and resolution of his servants to continue faithful ; as in the case of *Joseph, Daniel*, and his *three friends*, &c. If Christ stand by, and strengthen me, I know *I shall be able to do all things* ; I shall not *then* be flattered, or frightened out of the way of my duty ; no wind that can blow, shall *then* turn me to another point ; nothing shall *then* be able to prevail for my comfort to a wilful and deliberate forsaking of God ; no argument, no temptation, though privacy, opportunity, impunity from men, with rewards of wordly gain and honour, should all concur to enforce a temptation. But, by that heavenly assistance, I shall be preserved humble, temperate, chaste, patient, thankful, self-denying, crucified to the world, and *hold fast my integrity till I die ; still perfecting holiness in the fear of my God, growing in grace, and in the knowledge of my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*, waxing stronger from day to day,

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be seldomer surprized, offend less, and repent more quickly, and watch more narrowly afterwards, till at last I receive the crown.

Especially, let me watch against my *constitution* sins, such as I am most inclined to, and where a temptation doth easily enter; where the devil can take the fastest hold, and be least suspected; where he hath *formerly* sprung a mine, and made a breach: I have known some humble watchful christians, after being recovered from their backslidings, who abhorred every temptation to *that sin*, by which they had been defiled and wounded: they can hardly put up a prayer, but they mention it; hardly have their hearts affected in any ordinance, but they are inwardly ashamed of it; hardly hear of any one guilty of the like, but they are ready to burst out into tears.

Fix therefore, I beseech thee, *most gracious God!* my unfeigned *resolutions* of cleaving to thee, *with full purpose of heart*: and shew thy strength in my weakness, by enabling me to *do what I now resolve*. To that end, teach me to watch over *my heart*, to keep it with all diligence to be more conversant with my own thoughts, examining the motions that arise in my heart, whence they come, and whither they go, and what they tend to, that I may suppress the *beginnings* of sin. The unsearchable *deceitfulness* of the heart, the roving, stragglings, and wandrings of the *thoughts*, the ungovernable motions and stirrings of the *passions* and affections, with the *corrupt inclinations* that are ready to comply with temptation, make such a constant watchfulness necessary.

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fary. Let me live no longer as a stranger to myself, but by *self-reflection* dwell more at home, reckoning my principal work to be within-doors, to keep my own vineyard. Teach me to watch over my *senses*, to guard the door of my *lips*, to govern my *passions*; to be wary in the *choice* of my company, and in the right *use* of it; to be circumspect in every step of my daily walk, to call myself frequently to a reckoning, to cast up my accounts at the foot of every page (by *every day's* review of my actions) to live always as in God's presence, and be awed every where by the thought of his *holy eye*, to shun the occasions and appearances of evil, &c.

By the neglect of this, spiritual distempers will insensibly creep upon us. There is such a venom and malignity in sin, to wound and weaken the soul, to put us off the hinges, to disorder and unfit us for any spiritual service, to make our hearts vain and frothy, lazy and listless, that we shall easily let slip our opportunities, lose our seasons, and languish and pine away, notwithstanding all the means of thriving and growth. And hence it is that so many professors mourn and complain, lick the dust, and lie among the clods, are dead under the most awakening ministry, and barren under the most fruitful means. Hence it is they do little good, as well as taste little comfort; some duties are neglected, and others performed slightly; and in none of them do they meet with that sweetness and satisfaction, that refreshment and advantage, fruit and benefit as formerly. And all from the neglect of  
*watchfulness,*



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*watchfulness*, making bold with temptation, and not standing upon their guard in the use of their christian armour.

And because no place, no condition, no employment is exempted from *temptations*, let me fortify myself every morning against all assaults for that day, by serious prayer, as holy *David* was wont to do: *My voice* (saith he) *shalt thou hear in the morning, O Lord; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up*, Psal. 5. vers. 3, 4. Let the law of God be my daily and delightful study; that I may be able presently to bring my words and actions to the touchstone; and know how to manage *the sword of the spirit* on all occasions, *against the fiery darts of the devil*: that knowing the rule, I may not be doubtful, or at a loss; whenever I am tempted, I may not make a stand to *parley*, but immediately summon all my forces to resist, and reject the snare; being assured from God, that the continuance of this warfare shall end in a most glorious victory. *He will shortly tread down satan under my feet. Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ my Lord.*

S E C T.



S E C T. XXVIII.

*The import and obligation of our baptismal covenant. The renewal of it by a solemn dedication of ourselves to God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, exemplified and recommended.*

ALL this, *O my soul!* which I have now resolved on, is no more than what I am obliged to by my vow in baptism; to renounce the *devil* and his works, the *flesh* and the lusts thereof, the *world*, and conformity to it, that I may love and serve the Lord: agreeable to the undoubted right which God hath in me by creation, redemption, and his innumerable other benefits. But the *outward washing of baptism*, and a visible profession of obedience, will not save me, without the answer of a good conscience towards God, 1 Pet. chap. 3. vers. 21. May I not by the consideration of my baptismal covenant, suppose God speaking to my conscience to this effect? “Will you  
“take me for your whole portion and felicity? And my law for the constant rule  
“of your obedience? And fight against the  
“world, the flesh, and the devil, to your  
“life’s end? Will you believe in *Jesus Christ*, and receive him as a prince and  
“saviour? And adhere to the faith and  
“obedience of the gospel, how hazardous  
“and

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“ and difficult soever the profession and  
 “ practice of it may be. Will you receive  
 “ the *blessed Spirit* as your teacher, sancti-  
 “ fier, and comforter; and cherish all his  
 “ motions, to enlighten, purify, confirm,  
 “ comfort, and assist you? ” ’Tis my hearty  
 consent to *these terms*, and resolved compliance  
 with them, which baptism obligeth to;  
 and *this is the answer of a good conscience*  
*towards God.*

I have often renewed *this covenant* on several  
 occasions; but did I ever duly consider the  
 tenor and obligation of it? How have I lyed  
 unto the God of truth? Dealt deceitfully with  
 him? and been false and fickle, treacherous  
 and unfaithful to what I promised? O let  
 me now again repeat it, and give up my self  
 once more to be the Lord’s. O help me to  
 do it with the greatest seriousness, as the most  
 important affair of my whole life! By thine  
 aid and grace *alone*, shall I be sincere and cor-  
 dial in this surrender and dedication of my  
 self. O breathe upon my soul, most Holy  
 spirit, (*the power of the highest*) that there  
 may be no hypocrisy or reservation, in this so  
 weighty and solemn transaction between God  
 and me! —

O most blessed and glorious TRINITY!  
 Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, thy favour is  
 my life, and thy loving kindness is better  
 than life: thy will should have been my rule,  
 thy word my law, thy glory my end, to  
 please thee my principal business, and to en-  
 joy thy love and presence my ultimate fel-  
 icity. But I am one of thy *revolted crea-*  
*tures,*

on TIME and ETERNITY. 167

tures, who have lost thine image, and rebell'd against thy law, slighted thy authority, and rejected thy grace, and deserve to be cast out of thy sight, and banish'd from thy presence for ever. Nevertheless, *O most merciful God and Father*, upon thy gracious invitation and call, I now return to thee my rightful Lord; acknowledging thee, as my almighty, wise, and bountiful Creator, my absolute owner, my righteous governour, my end, my happiness, and chief good. I *now* accept thine offer'd mercy; I *now* submit to the scepter of thy grace; and give up my self to thee, as my King, and my God; to rule and sanctify me now and be my everlasting portion. I desire to be no longer *my own*, but *thine* to whom of right I belong, and ought to be devoted. I yield my self to thee, *O my Lord!* Accept and possess that which is thine own. I lay my self at thy foot, at all times, and in all conditions, to be at thy dispose, and in every thing to acquiesce in thy good pleasure. Deliberately resolving, with unfeigned and free consent of my will, to walk before thee in holiness and religiousness all the days of my life. Hereby I consecrate and devote my self to be thy perpetual, avowed servant: *Lord I am thy servant, I am thy servant, the son of thine handmaid.* Though other Lords have had dominion over me, I will now make mention of thy name, and of thy righteousness only, by Jesus Christ. —

*O blessed Jesus*, my all sufficient Saviour! Thy dying love, infinite condescension, and matchless grace, hath at last overcome me,  
and



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and constrain'd me to resolve to be wholly *thine*, who hast redeem'd and bought me with thy most precious blood. *X* I now acknowledge and own thee, as *my Lord, and my Jesus*, my prophet, priest, and king; my sacrifice, surety, and ransom, to satisfy for my sins, and reconcile me unto God; to instruct me in his will, and teach me the mysteries of his kingdom, and the way to the Father. How often hast thou open'd thine arms, and called me, yea beseech'd me to come unto thee, and accept of life? But I refused to come. I adore thy merciful condescension, that yet thou wilt receive me on such easy terms.

O thou Lord of life and glory, now accept of an unworthy helpless sinner, who flies to thee as his only refuge and hope! who is convinc'd that *none but Christ, none but Christ* can make his peace with God, and save from wrath to come. I acknowledge thy title to me, and my obedience, and to all I have by dying for me. I desire to take thy yoke upon me, for it is easy; and thy burthen which is light. I desire to be entirely, and for ever thine, *in everlasting covenant never to be broken*: to take up the cross and follow thee, whithersoever thou shalt lead me; through the strait gate, and the *narrow* way. I will reserve no lust, refuse no labour, grudge at no suffering, stick at no difficulty, so I may please and honour thee, and continue in thy love. O shed abroad more of thy love in my heart, to make all things

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## on TIME and ETERNITY. 169

things easy for his sake, *who hath loved me, and washed me from my sins in his own blood.*

O God the holy Ghost, I acknowledge thee as my great teacher and sanctifier, and give up my self to thee, as the author of all saving knowledge and holiness: by thee I have been convinced of my sin, against the law of God, and the gospel of Christ and of my necessity of his merit, satisfaction, and righteousness, to justify my guilty soul, by procuring the forgiveness of sin, and my acceptance with God; and of the freeness of his love, the riches and all-sufficiency of his grace, towards all who come unto God by him. I adore thee, O most blessed spirit! as proceeding, and sent from the father and the son, to renew all the powers of my soul, and restore the divine image there; to enlighten my mind to know and receive the truth, as it is in Jesus, and purify my heart; and to sanctify all the members of my body and make them instruments of righteousness unto holiness, which before were servants unto sin; and gradually to deliver me from the power, the defilement, and abode of sin; as from the guilt and punishment by the blood of Jesus. And as the witness of God to the truth of the holy scriptures; and as the great paraclete to comfort and establish the hearts of believers, sealing them up to the day of redemption, and giving them the earnest of the heavenly inheritance. O blessed spirit, be thou my witness that though I have violated the law of God, and defac'd his image, and formerly undervalu'd the love of Christ, and

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the grace of the gospel, yet by thine aid, I *now* accept what I have so long neglected: and thankfully devote my self henceforward to be the Lord's in a covenant relation. —

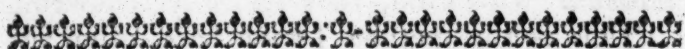
But fearing and distrusting my self, I give up my self entirely to the conduct of *thy* grace, depending upon it for my establishment and perseverance. O form my heart into an obediential frame! that in every thing I may endeavour to answer the *ends* and *obligations* of this devoted state.

To this *one God* I have once again dedicated and resign'd my self; to serve, and please and honour thee, in thought, word, and act, to the last moment of my life: In the performance of all *duties*, even those which I have been most averse from; in the mortification of every *lust*, and the forsaking of every *sin*, even those which I was once most addicted to: resolving deliberately to allow my self in nothing great or little, secret or open, which I shall know or believe to be contrary to thy holy will; making it my business to be fruitful in good works, to the praise of my redeemer; waiting in the use of all his appointed means, for higher measures of grace and holiness, to be more victorious over inward lusts, and outward temptations, still pressing towards the mark for the prize of my high and holy calling; even eternal life.

— I call heaven and earth, O Lord, to witness this day that I own and avow this to be my mind, and the settled prevailing purpose of my soul. | This I again ratify and confirm without

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without any clauses or exceptions. *So help me O my God.* Glory be to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. —



### S E C T. XXIX.

*Practical and consolatory reflections on the preceeding self-dedication, or covenant with God.*

**I** Have this day solemnly avouched the Lord to be my God, to walk in his ways; whereby to fortify my resolutions, that *I and my \* house*, (and all that I can persuade to be of my mind) *will serve the Lord*. I intend, desire, and hope never wilfully to violate the *faith*, which I have now plighted in the presence of God; but to continue *stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, &c.*

Should I undertake any new employment, or enter into any new condition, or change the place of my abode, where I might see more of God's dishonour, and meet with more and stronger temptations to sin, and be called to the performance of more difficult duties, greater watchfulness, and self-denial, &c. I would hope hereby to engage the presence of God with me, and his blessing on all my affairs, (on which depends the success of all that I undertake;) and would

P 2

hope

\* Deut. 6. 17, 18.



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hope the better to preserve my integrity, not only *this year*, but in all the remaining portion of my time, by the abiding sense of my *covenant* with God, thus seriously renewed.

This is the method I have been often advis'd to for *peace of conscience*, under doubts and scruples concerning my spiritual state; to put the matter out of doubt, by *again* accepting the offered mercy and grace of the gospel; and heartily consenting to the new covenant; giving up my self to God in Christ, to be ruled and saved by him. Blessed be God, I have now done so. *Lord*, say *Amen*, to thy part of the covenant, that thou art, and wilt *be my God*; as I desire unfeignedly to do to mine, that I will be *thy servant*.

But because articles are sooner consented to, than made good, tho' I seriously intend never to disown this my solemn act and deed, but firmly to adhere to it, as long as I live; that *having sworn*, I will endeavour to perform it, that this shall be my everlasting choice, never to be recanted or alter'd; yet considering the sad instances of my former weakness, and the vigilance and subtle malice of my great adversary, I again implore the succour of *divine grace*, to keep it for ever in the purpose of my heart, that it may be *as the laws of the Medes and Persians*, never to be reversed. I have given up my name to be thine; O put thy fear into my heart, that I may never depart from thee! Imprint thy laws upon my heart, that my obedience may be uniform and universal, unwavering  
and

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and perpetual; suitable to so honourable and near a relation to thee! I am sensible I want *wisdom* and *strength* to that purpose, but thou hast bid me ask it of thee, *who givest liberally* to all, without desert, and *upbraidest not*, with present unworthiness, or former faults. *O lead me not into temptation, but deliver me from evil.* Stand by and strengthen me in the hour of *trial*, lest I forget my vows, and deny thee. O that *my soul* may never draw back, lest *thine* have no pleasure in me. I can serve no better master; O let mine ears be bored to the door of *thine house*, as the token and assurance of my being thy servant unto death. I know 'tis my duty, I am sensible 'tis my privilege and honour; I am convinc'd, that 'tis my interest and felicity; my *soul*, my *life*, my *present* and *everlasting welfare*, and *all* depends upon it, that thou shouldst be *my God for ever*: O conduct me by thy holy spirit of grace, that I may walk, and act, as having heartily consented he should be so; and *direct my heart into thy love*, and *the faithful keeping of thy commandments*: that when so many professors make shipwreck of faith and a good conscience, and discredit the religion of my Lord, by their shameful falls, thou may'st make me stand, and improve the warning of their examples to walk humbly; and *while I stand, to take heed lest I fall.*

Having thus surrendred my self to God, what is there, *O my soul!* that is ever like to prevail with me to go back; and revolt from him? Is the gratification of a *lust*, the secu-

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ring of an *estate*, compliance with a *friend*, the pleasing of a *superior*, living in *ease*, and *honour*, and *outward prosperity* for a little while, the saving my body from *suffering*, or my life from *violence*, or whatever else be the motive of my unfaithfulness to God, and apostacy from him? Is *any*, is *all* of these *any* way considerable, compared with *the blessedness of having God to be my God*? For thereby I have the forgiveness of all my sins; and the assurance of his favour; the certainty of present protection, and provision; all creatures reconciled to me, and to be employed for my good, as the friend of God; All things to work together for my advantage; and by the evidence of my adoption, a well-grounded hope of eternal life. *God, as my sun and shield wil give grace and glory, and withhold no good thing.* So unspeakably comprehensive are the privileges of so near a relation to God in Christ. *O happy are the people who are in such a case! Blessed are the persons whose God is the Lord.* —

Do I *resolve* to abide by my choice, and to trust in Christ for persevering grace? And shall I not, *ought I not to take comfort* in it! Shall I not give God the glory of his *infinite goodness*, by adhering to him, and rejoicing in him, notwithstanding all temptations to the contrary? Casting all my care upon him, and quieting my self in the all-sufficiency of my heavenly Father; having a *God in covenant*, who will supply all my wants and take care of me, as *his own*? Shall I not give him the glory of his *truth and power*,  
by

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by trusting him in every condition? By confidence in his promise, dependance on his word, faithfulness to his interest, and constancy in his service to the end? Is it not a most encouraging thought, that *God doth never abandon any, who do not first forsake him?* And after such strict engagements, as I have laid upon my self, shall I ever strike the fatal stroke with my own hand? Shall I be off and on, say and unsay, promise and retract? And after I have proceeded thus far, shall I forsake the fountain of living waters, and turn again to broken cisterns?

After I have examin'd my self, consider'd my ways, confess'd my sins, and upon serious deliberation am come to a *resolve*; and in pursuance of it, have devoted my self with such solemnity to be the Lord's; shall I ever after this, *forsake him, and my own mercies, and lightly esteem the rock of my salvation?* Now I have learn'd, in some measure, what *sin* is, by the sorrows and anguish of an hearty *repentance*; now I have discover'd so much of the snares and devices of *satan*, whereby I have formerly been betray'd; (now I am sensible of the dangerous and powerful influence and infection of *bad company*; the treachery of *fleshy lusts*; the bewitching temptations of the world; and have tasted a little, by my own experience of the pleasantness of wisdom's paths, the peace and satisfaction of devotedness to God, by the present rewards of a calm conscience, the communications of divine grace, and the encouragement of an holy hope, &c. and am persuaded



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swaded of the stability of his word, and the certainty of eternal life to all who continue in well doing; shall I *after all this*, ever break with God again? Shall I ever cancel this engagement? violate this my vow? and falsify so many repeated promises and resolutions?

Oh that this power may rest upon me! and his grace work in me, both to will and to do! *that this God may be my God for ever, and my grace unto death.* Let me never re-assume this gift and surrender of myself, or defraud God of his right and property. *His I am, and him I will serve*: living wholly to him; using all I have for him; being willing he should *do what he list with his own*, and consequently dispose of me, and of all that any way belongs to me, *as shall seem good in his eyes.* I am *thine*; O Lord, save me. Command me my work, appoint me my duty, direct my station, order my condition. Let me be *thine*, though employed in the meanest service, and the most laborious self-denying work. Tho' I should be but a *door-keeper in thine house, an hewer of wood, or a drawer of water*; though I must pinch the flesh, and swim against the tide, and renounce what before I valued; yet *this God shall be my God for ever.* ✠

By this means, when I come to die, (if God should add *more years* to the little number I have past, besides *this* I have now begun) I may be able to say, with upright *Hezekiah*, *Remember, Lord, how I have walked before thee in mine integrity*; that in the face of death and the grave, in the view of another world, and the near prospect of eternity, I may be  
able

## on TIME and ETERNITY. 177

able to rejoice in hope and say, *Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.* Thou art my Saviour, and I have waited for thy salvation. I have sought thee with my whole heart; I have chosen thy favour, rather than worldly grandeur and prosperity; I have prized *thy love*, and endeavoured to obey thee, (as the best expressions of *my own*) though with many imperfections, which I bewail; I have delighted more in thy service and presence, than in the pleasures of sin and vanity; thy testimonies have been the joy of my heart; I took no delight in the company of the ungodly, after I was devoted to thee; O let me not have my portion with them in the other world! fortify me now against the king of terrors, strengthen me in this my last conflict, enable me to triumph over death, by the cross of Christ (*my victorious redeemer*), and carry me through the dark valley, at the divorce of soul and body, and grant me an abundant entrance into thine heavenly kingdom; let me be numbred among thy chosen, and my body wait in hope, till the general resurrection, that I may then see thy glory, and dwell with thee for ever.

I gave up myself to thee, and do not repent my choice; acknowledge me now for *thine*, and do not lose that which is thy own. *Lord Jesus!* thou hast paid my ransom, to deliver me from *satan*, and from eternal wrath; Oh do not reject me now, and cast me off. Is it not thine office and covenant, to save those that trust in thee? Oh remember thy word unto thy servant, wherein thou hast caused me to hope, when I ventured my salvation on thy promise

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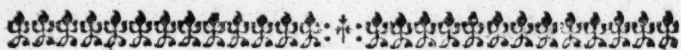
promise, and trusted to thy gracious word for eternal life. \ Thy love hath already overcome the greatest impediments of my salvation. \ It is as easy now to receive me as to love me. Thou hast prepared glory for thy redeemed ones ; and hast bid me believingly to follow thee, and wait for thy salvation. Thou hast begotten me to a lively hope, by the incorruptible seed of the world ; let me not now be deprived of the inheritance. \ Can that love that pitied me in my blood, and fetched me from the gates of hell, now suffer me to fall into it ? O crown thy grace, and perfect thy preparatory mercy, with everlasting mercy.

By voluntary *consent* and *choice*, thou art *my God* ; and thy presence in heaven, my ultimate felicity ; I have trusted to thy gracious promise, to prepare me for it, and bring me to it ; O fulfil thy word unto thy servant, wherein thou hast caused me to hope ; and mercifully receive my departing soul, that seeks thee, that loves thee, that breathes after thee, and desires nothing but to know thee better, and love thee more, and be more entirely conformed to thine image, and live always in thy blessed presence. \ Thou hast also called me out of the world, placed thine image upon me, enabled me to make it my business, though with many imperfections, to serve, and please, and honour thee ; O receive me to the fulness of thy love, and grace, and present me faultless before the presence of thy glory, with exceeding joy. Amen. Holy Father, be it unto me according to thy word ; through the merits and intercession of my all sufficient saviour, Jesus Christ,

the

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*the faithful and true witness, in whom all thy promises are yea and Amen.* —



S E C T. XXX.

Thanksgiving to God for his innumerable benefits and mercies, particularly in the year past; with some direction and advice concerning it.

**H**OW precious and delightful are the thoughts of thy benefits! *O Lord, how great is the sum of them!* Should I count them, they are more in number than the stars. Shall I not observe and consider them? *Main- tain a grateful sense of them, and publicly acknowledge them on all occasions?* — that I may *blefs the Lord at all times, and his praise be continually in my mouth.* More especially should I *conclude and begin this year, with so- lemn praises to my great benefactor and pre- server.* I ought to begin and close *every day* with it, thereby *to make the out-goings of the morning and the evening to rejoice in God.* † Every year, every day, every hour, every mo- ment offers me an occasion to praise him; be- cause he is every minute gracious, and hath been so ever since he gave me my being. †

Almost one half of my time hath been spent in *sleep*, when I *remember not God, nor my- self*; yet doth he who never slumbers or sleeps, — remember me in mercy, and watch over me for good. \ Yea, though in the other half, by day, I have *forgotten* him in a worse sense, by casting off his fear, and not remembering that  
his



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his holy eye is upon me, yet hath he not forgotten to be gracious. *Therefore \* I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify him with thanksgiving, and never forget his benefits. With which sacrifice he is better pleased, than with an ox or bullock that hath horns and hoofs.*

He hath prolonged my life *this last year*, when so many others of his more useful servants have been removed by death; and given me farther time and space to repent, when multitudes have been surprized in their impenitence. Yea, *it was he* who formed me in the womb, and brought me safely into the world, by whose providence I have hitherto been supplied: *In him I live and move, and continually exist:* To his undeserved goodness I am beholden for all the good of any kind which I ever enjoyed: to his bounty I am indebted for all that I now have; and must depend upon it, whatever I can hereafter expect.

Through infancy and childhood he was pleased to preserve me; favouring me with many advantages in my *birth and education*; providing for me a competent livelihood; disposing the circumstances of my *condition*, relations, places of abode, &c. more advantageously than he hath done for thousands; affording me many helps for the improvement of my mind, and the encrease of knowledge; and preventing my necessities, and even my desires, with numberless blessings, which I never so much as asked for. *He hath caused several of my relations to yield me comfort, when they*  
might

might have been sore afflictions. He hath raised up *strangers* to befriend me, and shew me kindness. How many favours have I received from God, by the instrumentality of other *men*? to whom God gave the will and the power, the opportunity, and the inclination?

How often hath he *delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling*, by seasonable preservations? so that I do yet *walk before him in the land of the living*. He hath rescued me from the brink of many a *precipice*, which through ignorance or inadvertency, I did not apprehend or fear. When I knew not which way to turn, he hath made my path plain. Under sinking *disappointments* he hath commanded succour; and been a *present help in the time of trouble*. In great perplexities, his eye hath been my *guide*, and his arm hath brought salvation: it may be by the ministry of his *holy angels*, obeying his order, and giving unusual intimations of very great, and otherwise unsuspected dangers; or sending relief and deliverance, by such small, unlikely and unexpected means, as carried the name of *God* visibly engraven on them, innumerable *calamities* he saves me from, which others groan under; and as many  *blessings* am I favoured with, whereof they are destitute. He spreads my table, and fills my cup, and gives me *all things richly to enjoy*, when many excellent persons, of whom the world is not worthy, are fed with *the bread of affliction, and the water of affliction*. Others have only necessities, or but few conveniencies in comparison with the plentiful provisions God hath made

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for my chearful obedience to him. † And shall I not praise him for \* *the precious things of heaven, the blessings of the earth, the dew and the deep?* and the more especially for the *good-will of him who dwelt in the bush*, to sanctify and sweeten all: whereby common mercies become the pledge and fore-runner of better things; as the fruit of his special kindness, the witness of his truth, and the seed of peace, and joy, and righteousness, and praise; by reason of his blessing on all that I possess, which otherwise would prove a snare, and a temptation, and be intermixed with a curse.

And besides the ordinary and continued bounty of every day, in the midst of how many *difficulties* and *dangers* have I felt the dear obligations of his preserving mercy? abroad and at home; in foreign countries, as well as my own; in the midst of enemies, and among friends; in all places, and at all times.

He hath prolonged my *health*, or made my *bed* in *sickness*. He hath often granted the *desires* of my heart, whenever it was for his glory; and contradicted my *wishes*, and disappointed my endeavours, in other instances, when it was more to my advantage. From how many *mischiefs* hath he saved me, by such things as I deprecated, and would have hindered? How many evils hath he turned for good? *He hath heard my cry in the day of adversity, and set my feet in a large place.* He hath chastened me for my *profit*: his rod and his staff have comforted me: he hath spoken comfortably to me in the wilderness. \ Afflic-

tion  
 101 \* Deut. xxxiii. 13, 14.

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tion hath been useful and necessary physick ; made an instrument of virtue, and so a token of his love. Therefore \* *I will sing of the mercy of the Lord for ever, and with the voice of thanksgiving will I make known his faithfulness.*

He hath all along conducted me by his wisdom, guided me by his providence, and the angel of his presence hath directed my path, and ordered all my goings. He hath been a cloud to me by day, and a pillar of fire by night : he hath helped me in my straits, and supplied my wants, and comforted me in all my sadnesses : his powerful and gracious presence hath been my constant guard ; and his sovereign never-failing goodness hath compassed me about with mercy on every side. \ For which, O most merciful Father, my soul and all that is within me desires to speak thy praise.

The advantageous circumstances of many divine favours do raise their value, and deserve to be particularly observed and acknowledged. How suitably, how seasonably, how wisely hath he conferred his benefits ? With what tenderness and kindness ? With what freedom and readiness ? Of his own bounty and goodwill, without any necessity, or obligation on his part ; without any desert, and sometimes without so much as a prayer on mine. And what is more, notwithstanding my ingratitude and forgetfulness of him, and great provocations, heightened by the abuse of so much mercy : demanding nothing, after all, in requital of so much kindness, but my acceptance of his

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love,



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love, and grateful sense of his goodness, and the sweetest and most reasonable expressions of it, by *thankful obedience*.

More especially would I bless the Lord, for enlightning my mind in the great mysteries of *religion*; disposing in wonderful wisdom the several means and methods, whereby he brought me to the *knowledge of the truth*, by parents, ministers, friends, acquaintance, books, afflictions, &c. beginning with me in *childhood*, awakening and cultivating the inbred notions of God, and natural religion, of good and evil, rewards and punishments; by the careful instructions of parents, or others concerned in my education; giving me the advantage of good examples, counsels and encouragements, to know and do well; with more assistance, and less hindrances and diversions, than to many others. Particularly, for the excellent privilege, and inestimable blessing of his *holy words and sacraments*; the liberty of the christian religion in the purity of it, in the most of these places, where God has been pleased to cast my lot. *Causing me to lay down in green pastures, and leading me beside the still waters*: instructing me in the revelation of his will and grace by *Jesus Christ*: acquainting me with the sublime principles and articles, precepts and rules, promises and hopes of the gospel, in order to eternal life.

I bless thee, O Lord, and shall for ever do so, that with any or all these advantages and helps, thy holy spirit hath taught me *to know the truth as it is in Jesus*, heartily to believe and obey it. That by thy grace I have been con-  
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on TIME and ETERNITY. 185

vinced of sin, and brought to repentance; shewing me the necessity of a Saviour, to make my peace with thee, the all-sufficiency of his grace, the fulness of his merit, the freeness of his love, and his readiness to receive me to mercy, inviting and calling me to it, and enabling me to accept his gracious invitation, and obey his compassionate call; making me willing by a *powerful and victorious grace*, drawing me with cords of love, and so effectually perswading me to consent to thy covenant, and comply with thy message, on the gracious terms of the gospel. *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who through his abundant mercy hath begotten me again to a lively hope*; having humbled my proud heart, and conquered the perverseness of my stubborn will, and brought my soul to an entire subjection to himself: who took pity on me, when he saw me in my blood, spread his shirt over me, cast a mantle upon my nakedness, washed me from my sins, and put his own comeliness upon me by sanctification: who opened my eyes when I was leaping blindfold into the pit of destruction; who healed my soul, when I was sick unto death; who rescued and recovered me from the slavery of the devil, when I was led captive by him at his will. Shall not a ransomed, redeemed slave, be thankful to his deliverer? Shall not a miserable undone sinner, who is received to mercy, be thankful for a pardon? Awake, *O my soul!* and utter a song of praise to him, \* *who forgiveth all thine iniquities, and healeth all*

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\* Psal. ciii. 3.

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*thy diseases ; who redeemeth thy life (thy soul) from destruction, and crowneth thee with loving kindness, and tender mercies. —*

Hath he made thee partaker of his own renewed image and likeness ? given thee his Son ? his grace ? his spirit ? and taken such a wretched creature into so near a relation to himself ; and promised to be thy God and guide, thy portion and thine inheritance, thy friend and thy physician, thy sun and thy shield, and thine exceeding great reward ? And shall not my soul speak aloud his praise ? Hath he been *\* merciful to my unrighteousness, and blotted out my sins ?* Hath he gathered me with his arm and carried me in his bosom ? Hath he been my Saviour and Redeemer, adopted me into his family, and promised to make me blessed in his glory, with the holy angels ? The curse being removed, and the hand-writing against me cancelled, the price paid, the breach made up, the mouth of justice stopped, and the condemning sentence of the law exchanged for a gracious pardon, through the sacrifice of *my blessed Lord Jesus ?* And shall I not praise his incomprehensible love and grace ? —

I likewise thank thee, most holy Father, for saving me from guilt and ruin, when assaulted by powerful and dangerous *temptations ;* that by preventing mercy, or *restraining grace,* thou hast kept me from many scandalous and presumptuous crimes. I thank thee for making the *sins of others* a warning and a caution to me ; an argument to humility, and a mo-

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\* Isa. xliii. 14.

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tive to watchfulness; for preserving my judgment from many errors and delusions, by which others are seduced; for enabling me to improve any opportunities of doing good, and making me in any thing useful to others: yea, I thank thee for all thy mercies to *other christians*, for all the gifts and graces, and usefulness of any of thy servants, wherein as a member of the same body, I desire to rejoyce; for any support and comfort to me, or any of them, under honourable sufferings for thy name's sake.

I desire unfeignedly to bless thee, for any succour, relief, and victory; with respect to the snares and buffetings of *satan*, and the vilest of his *temptations*. When he hath tempted me to apostacy, and infidelity, in speculation or practice; or question the truth of the holy scriptures, and the life to come; to doubt of the foundations of the christian faith, or to despair of the mercy of God, and give up the reins to sensual lust; or to draw me from God, by the love of the world, and the praise of men, by evil company, intemperance, secret wickedness, &c.

I bless thee with my whole soul for calling me back from any of my *wandrings*, and by infinite goodness recovering me after great *falls*, enabling me to return when I had gone astray, and seek thy forfeited favour, that thou may'st *heal my back-slidings*; giving me in order to it, a deep sense of my own sin, and of thy sovereign grace; leading me to a *saviour* whose blood cleanseth from all sin, when my guilty, defiled soul so much needed its pardoning



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pardoning and cleansing virtue; awakening me by thy word, and spirit, and providence, to perform them.

I bless thee who hast guided my feet into the way of *peace*, when by the terrors of an accusing *conscience*, and the sense of unpardon'd sin, and the apprehensions of thy deserved wrath, I was ready to *despair*: that tho' thou didst most justly hide thy face at any time, it was but for a little while; but didst seasonably, and in mercy return, to wipe off my tears, *restore the joy of thy salvation*, and chase away the clouds and darkness on my *spirit*, by the reviving presence of thy *own*. Thou who art the *author*, wilt be the *finisher* of my *faith*; and therefore tho' thou hast visited mine iniquities with a fatherly rod, yet *thy loving kindness thou hast not taken from me; or suffer'd thy faithfulness to fail, or thy covenant of peace to be removed*; but hast refreshed me with *hidden manna*, after great perplexities, saying unto my soul, *I am God; and even thy God*. Thou hast made me to hear thy voice, which was sweet; and to taste *thy love*, which is better than wine; enable me to say with thine apostle *Thomas, my Lord, and my God*; and to have had some communion with thee since, in publick or private duties.

For all these *innumerable mercies* I desire to praise thee, which yet are but in order to *greater*; I hope, in order to *everlasting kindness in heaven*. These are but the taste and earnest of what thou wilt bestow hereafter. *Oh how great is the goodness that he hath laid up for those that*

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## on TIME and ETERNITY. 189

that fear him! And now, Lord, what wait I for? my hope is even in thee. \ I thank thee, who hast thus put it into my heart, to render thee solemn praise, and once more to renew my covenant with thee. —

I will magnify the Lord, and my spirit shall rejoyce in God my Saviour. Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with me. (a) While I live, I will praise thee, and sing praises unto my God, while I have a being. O come and behold the works of the Lord, what he hath done for my soul! The Lord liveth; (b) blessed be my rock, and let the God of my salvation be exalted. Let my heart be glad, and my glory rejoyce, for the Lord is not asham'd to be called my God. Thanks be to God, who hath caused me to triumph in Christ Jesus. \ Sing unto the Lord, O ye his saints, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness! (c) I cried unto thee, and thou hast healed and saved me: I will give thanks to thee for ever. (d) I will shew forth thy loving-kindness in the morning, and thy faithfulness every night. \ For the Lord is good, his mercy everlasting, and his truth endures throughout all generations. O enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name. Bless the Lord, all ye his works, in all places of his dominions: bless the Lord, O my soul. —

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(a) Psal. 104. 33.

(b) Ps. 18. 46. (c) Ps. 30. (d) Ps. 119. 62.

Let me add, for a *conclusion*, that the particular deliverances, supports and consolations, which at any time God hath given in cases of great exigence, or in answer to importunate prayer, ought never to be forgotten. Many experienc'd christians have been wont to write down such remarkable appearances of God for them, with the particular circumstances that did recommend and enhance the mercy (whether spiritual or temporal) as an encouragement to trust in God in future difficulties. And have afterwards found the comfort and advantage of being able to have recourse to such papers. \ This practice I recommend as what has been useful and consolatory to divers christians for many years afterwards; and to some others of their more intimate friends, to whom they might, without vanity, be imparted. \ What *experiences* might be recorded, of signal returns to prayer, and seasonable manifestations of the truth, and goodness, and wisdom of God, if all the *instances* thereof were duly recollected and preserv'd! And how sweet, and pleasant would the work of prayer and praise then be! With what rejoicing and delight should we set about it, and live in it, if the constraining goodness and love of God, and a thankful sense of his unspeakable mercies did bring us to him, and indict and animate every word! \ What support and comfort, and *probable* hopes (*at least*) of the special love of God might we derive from the various passages of his compassion and kindness! And hereby we may be able more heartily to give him thanks, for *pardon*, *sanctification*,

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cation, and adoption, which we commonly mention with too much doubt and fear. —

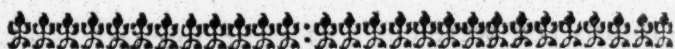
It may likewise be adviseable to examine and record the workings of *your own* spirit, under such dispensations: what thoughts you then had of God? What acts of faith, love, and thankfulness, you did then manifest? What evidences of God's favour, and what discovery of your own sincerity you have had at such times? When, and how, and by what means you were cur'd of your uncomfortable unbelief, and rais'd from your despondency? What promises you had recourse to, for relief? What considerations were most helpful to you? What frame of spirit you kept up in prayer, before and after? What resolutions and engagements you made to God, to love, and trust, and praise and serve him, and give up all to his dispose for the future? And what consequent obligation may be inferr'd from thence, to acquiesce in the will of God, and resign our selves entire to him, saying, *this God is our God for ever and ever, and he will be our guide unto death.* —







# T H E A P P E N D I X.



*From what time the Jews reckon'd the beginning of their year: Of the difference between their sacred and civil account. The feast of trumpets on the first day of the year: its institution, nature, and design: the traditions and customs of the Jews respecting that day.*

**U**PON the deliverance of the *Jews* out of *Egypt*, the first month which began with the new moon, next to the vernal equinox, was to be accounted \* *the beginning of months*; (it answers to the latter end of our *March*, and the beginning of *April*, and is sometimes called *Nisan*, and sometimes *Abib*.) It was ordinarily, after that deliverance, reckon'd the *first month* of the year, in their *sacred*, or *ecclesiastical account*. The computation of years till then, from the creation of the world, was from *Tisri* or *September*, † as the beginning of

\* *Exod.* 12. 1:

† *Lightfoot*, Vol. II. p. 1322. *Bishop Patrick's* comment. upon *Exod.* 12. 2. and chap. 23. 16.

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of years; but now they are commanded to begin their reckoning from *March*. Therefore the *passover* kept in this month, is said to be observed in the *first* month: and the feast of *Purim*, which was kept in our *February*, is said to be in the *last* month, that is, of the *sacred year*. A period so remarkable and extraordinary, as that was to the *Jews*, deserved very well to be particularly remembred and taken notice of; and might justly be accounted the *first*, or chiefest of *their months*. And by comparing *Exod. xii. 41.* with *Gal. iii. 17.* it may be concluded, that *Abraham* received the promise on the fifteenth day of this month: and it is computed, that about the same time of the year *Isaac* was born; and the *tabernacle* afterwards erected in the wilderness.

As the *redemption* of *Israel*, from their *bondage* in *Egypt* was but a *type* of a more glorious one by the *Messiah*, he was pleased to suffer *death* in this month, *John xviii. 28.* According to this computation, the month *Tisri* (which began with the first new moon next to the *autumnal equinox*) is often called the *seventh month*; but was not so accounted before the deliverance of *Israel* out of *Egypt*. As to civil and political affairs, it was for the most part reckoned the first month of the year; on this account, in this month \* *Tisri* (which answers to part of our *September*, and part of *October*) on the fifteenth day of the month,

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\* Heidegeri *Hist. Patriarch. Tom. 1. Diff.*  
12. §. 22. *de Anno Patriarcharum.*

was the feast of *tabernacles*, when the † fruits of the earth were gathered in, and is said to be in the *end* of the year. Much hath been said by many learned men, for the date of the world's creation, and the beginning of the year, from the *vernal* equinox, or the spring. And the *Egyptians* are alledged as keeping the great festival of *Aries*, or of the new year, when the sun enters into *Aries*. But however uncertain that be, and difficult to determine it, yet the *Jews* reckon to have been in *Autumn*, the creation of the world, the birth of the first patriarchs, reparation of the tables of the law, the dedication of the temple, the three great solemn feasts of the beginning of the year, and other remarkable passages. As many religious assemblies, and solemn feasts, were appointed of God to the *Jews*, in this month *Tisri*, as in all the year besides.

That the *birth* and *baptism* of our blessed Saviour, *Jesus Christ*, should be at this time of the *feast of tabernacles*, is as considerable, as that his *passion* should be about the time of the *Jewish passover*. He was sacrificed for us at that time, when by God's appointment, the *paschal lamb* was to be offered as his type: and at the *feast of tabernacles* he came to pitch his

† Exod. 23. 15, 16. See Ger. I. Vossii *Isag. Chronol.* dissert. 2. Scaliger *de Emend. Temp.* Lydiat *de variis Annorum formis.* Selden *de Ann. Civili vet. Jud.* Joel ii. 23. 1 Kings 8. 2. Lightfoot *Horæ in Mat.* 2. 1. Fr. Spanhemii *F. Introd. ad Chronol. & Hist. Sacram.* 4to. p. 16, 27, &c. J. Mayeri *Diatribæ de Festis Jud.* 8vo. c. 3.

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his tent in our nature, to \* tabernacle in our flesh, and dwell among us. ✕ The sceptre was so far gone from *Judah*, that the *Jews* were compelled by foreign power, instead of observing the *feast of tabernacles* at *Jerusalem*, every one to repair to his own city to be taxed, as the emperor *Augustus* had commanded, (and it is not very likely he would appoint that in the depth of winter, the time of our *Christmas*) and now was the season for *Shilo* to appear.

The 81st *Psalms*, composed by *Asaph*, for the first day of this month, or the *feast of trumpets* †, is supposed to have been in remembrance of that deliverance out of *Egypt*: the sounding of trumpets being a token of liberty. This *feast of trumpets*, on the first day of the new year, according to their civil account, is thus commanded, *Lev.* 23. 24. *Numb.* 29. 2. and *chap.* 10. 10. That it should be a *sabbath*, and a memorial of blowing of trumpets, an holy convocation, &c. Some think it is called a memorial of trumpets, to preserve the memory of *Isaac's* deliverance, by the substitution of a *ram* to be sacrificed in his stead: to this purpose it may be alledged, that it is sometimes called by the *Jews*, the *binding of Isaac*; — which they suppose to have been in the same day of the year. By others termed *festum cornu*, the feast of the horn. ✕

But it is more probable, that this name was not given, with any respect to *Isaac*, but on

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the

\* John i. 14.

† Dr. Hammond in loc. Godeau *Univers. Hist. de l'Eglise.* tom. 4. c. 1. sect. 6. Hospinian. de *Fest. Judaic.*



the account of that *kind of trumpets* which were then sounded, viz. such as were made of sheep or *rams horns* \*. | Others think it to have been appointed of grateful remembrance of former *vic-tories* which God had afforded them; particularly *that at Jericho*, where was the first opposition they met with in their passage to *Canaan*: and the walls of the city fell down at the sound of such horn-trumpets, *Josh. vi. 13, 20.* But the most likely account of it is this; That it was intended to solemnize the *beginning of the new year*, to mind them of the beginning of the world, and to excite their thankfulness for the fruits, and blessings, and benefits of the year preceding. The extraordinary blowing of trumpets by the priests, at that time, (in all their cities, as well as at *Jerusalem*, where two † Silver trumpets were also used at the temple, as well as these of horn, and the *Levites* sung the 81st *Psalms*) might serve, both to stir up the people to bless God for the favours of the year past, acknowledging his goodness in preserving them to the beginning of another; and withal excite them to pray for his protection and blessing for the *new year*, on which they now entered.

*Maimonides*, the famous Jewish Rabbín, thinks the sounding of trumpets at this time, was designed to signify some such exhortation

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\* Whether the year of *Jubilee* was proclaimed by such trumpets, see Bp. *Patrick's* Commentary upon *Lev. xxv. 10.*

† *Lightfoot's Temple service*, chap. 16. sect. 5.

as this ; \* *Arise, O ye sleepers, out of your sleep ; and you that slumber awake out of your slumbring. Search your works, and turn by repentance. Remember your creator, you that have forgotten the truth, and have exchanged it for the vanities of the world ; and have all your lives wandred after vanity, which will not profit or deliver you. Consider your souls, consider your ways and works ; and let every one of you forsake his evil way, and his thoughts that are not good.*

Some have imagined a typical representation of the two covenants in this feast. The old covenant figured by the year passed ; and the covenant of grace, or the gospel state, by the new year then begun ; and that by the sound of trumpets was prefigured the future preaching of the gospel, according to that of the apostle ; *Their sound went forth unto all the earth, and their words unto the end of the world.* And so the feast of trumpets is abrogated by the preaching of the gospel, if that were typically signified by it. The publication of the gospel is the joyful sound, Psal. lxxxix. 15. and ministers are to lift up their voice like a trumpet, Isa. lviii. 1. the discharge of their office, as watchmen, is expressed by *setting the trumpet to their mouth*, Hos. viii. 1. Ezek. xxxiii. When the Jews shall be converted to the faith of Christ, it is said, *In that day the great trumpet shall be blown, and they shall come, who are ready to perish*, Isa. 27. ult. It was the office of the priests to sound these

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trumpets,

\* *Canones de Pœnitent. chap. 3. can. 6.*

trumpets, *Numb. x. 8.* The publick dispensation of the gospel is committed to *ministers*, set apart for that work, as the sons of *Aaron* for theirs. We read but of *two* trumpets at first, for *Eleazar* and *Ithamar*, the two sons of *Aaron*, *Numb. iii. 4.* But *David* added many musical instruments: and in *Solomon's* time, at the dedication of the temple, we read of one hundred and twenty priests, who sounded with trumpets, *2 Chron. v. 12.* Without supposing any type here, in a strict and proper sense; we may yet farther consider the parallel, and observe how the joy and gratitude these trumpets did excite, is exceeded by that greater rejoicing, promised and foretold by the prophets, when the glad tidings of the gospel of salvation by the *Messiah*, should be published to the world, *Isa. liv. 1. Luke ii. 11. Gal. iv. 27.* Which hath been in part accomplished; and will be more complete, in that kingdom of *peace* and *purity*, which Christ will establish upon earth, toward the end of the world: and shall be finally perfected at the end of time; when days, and years, and time (thus measured) shall be no more. When the *Messiah*, our *blessed Saviour*, having finished his mediatory undertaking, as to what concerns *earth*, shall come again from *heaven*, with *the trumpet of God*, to raise the *dead*, and summon all the world to their final judgment. Then *shall he deliver up the kingdom to his Father*: and the faithful shall enter into the joy of *their Lord*, and be for ever with him.

There

There is a tradition among the *Jews*, mentioned by *Maimonides* \*, that on the *first day* of the *new year*, God enters into judgment for the sins of the year, and life past. That every one's faults are weighed against his good works. He that is found *righteous*, is sealed unto life: and he that is found *wicked*, is sealed unto death.

And it is a general custom that hath obtained among the *Jews*, for the ten first days of the *new year*, to rise out of their beds in the night, and to continue in their *synagogues*, praying and worshipping until break of day. The superstitious and ridiculous ceremonies of the † *modern Jews* on this day, I shall not repeat. However vain and groundless, superstitious and absurd many of their customs and practices are on this day: yet this blind devotion of the *Jews*, may justly shame, and condemn the *Christians* of our age: who commonly spend the *beginnings* of every year worse than any other parts of them; instead of any solid retirement, for prayer and meditation, which might assist them to *number their days*, and prepare for *eternity*; (instead, I say, of such seasonable exercises) how do vain and hurtful sports and pastimes, or trifling and unedifying mirth, and fruitless conversations, consume the greatest part of the days, (and *nights* too) of the *beginning of the year*! And thus when the *first fruits* of the year are offered up to sin and vanity, it is no wonder, if  
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\* *Canones de Pœnitent.* cap. 3. can. 5.

† *Vid. Cêremon. & Cont parmi les Juifs d'aujourd'hui*, part 2. c. 5.



the following parts of it are employed to no better purpose; without any due concern for the soul, and an everlasting state. ✕

To endeavour some *remedy* to these disorders, and give some *assistance* to such as desire seriously to make religion their principal business, is the end of publishing the foregoing *reflections*. I most heartily beseech the *God* of all grace, to influence by his holy spirit, the conscience of every reader, that some such good effect may be attained. ✕ Having found the practice recommended, to be of some use to myself, and my own heart warmed, in composing the *substance* of these papers, (though without any intention at that time, of exposing them to the world) it is not unreasonable to hope, that what hath been beneficial to one may be helpful to another. ✕ It cannot certainly be improper, to *begin* the year with *God*, with *whom* we should begin *every day*. ✕ It is decorous and becoming, to *dedicate* ourselves to him in a more solemn manner than ordinary, at *such a time*: thankful to acknowledge the *favours* and  *blessings* we have particularly received the *year past*: and to recollect the *sins* we have been guilty of: to confess and aggravate them with humility, *contrition*, and deep remorse: to renew our *covenant* with *God*: to repeat and fortify our *resolutions* of living better; imploring his *grace* to assist us in it; to reflect seriously on the mutability, frailty, and brevity of our *present life*: to consider the swiftness, uncertainty, irrevocableness, and consequent value of our *time*: to look forward to a *blessed* or *miserable eternity*.

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nity, one of which we must every one share in. And to confirm our faith in the *certainty thereof*, considering our *near approach* to such an unchangeable state: to think what *improvement* we should make of the *death* of others, especially of *relations*, and *friends*, who have *lately* been called home: to make the *supposition* in good earnest, that we may follow them, *this year*, and die before *another new-years-day*: to *impress* such a *thought* on our hearts, and the *inferences* that may naturally be deduced from it: to *beg of God* to enable us to *redeem our time*, and discharge the duty of our *particular places*; and *prepare* us for all the *events* of the *following year*: and so effectually *teach us to number our days*, that we may *apply our hearts unto true wisdom*. | Lest we be surprized by an *unexpected death*, before the period of another year. | And *lastly*, to *pray for our relations and friends, families and neighbours*, (and our *enemies* too;) and plead with God on the behalf of *Sion*, and the afflicted and deformed state of the *protestant churches*. ✕ To some of these, and the like purposes, I hope what is here offered, may be subservient if *considered with seriousness and application*, after *humble invocation of the blessing of God*, and the aids of his spirit; composing our minds and thoughts, as in his most awful, and holy presence.

I have only this to request; That if any reader shall find any real *benefit* in this kind, he would so far requite my charitable *assistance* of him; that when his heart is most serious, his spirit most composed and devout, and his affections

fections most vigorous and lively, he would not forget to put up one prayer to heaven for me, for greater holiness, and abilities to honour God, and persevering faithfulness to his truth, and interest, whatever temptations to desert it, may be employed by the *world*, the *flesh*, and the *devil*; the *three great enemies* of thine, and my salvation. +

J. S H O W E R.



Read Janry 14th 1857.

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S E R M O N

Occasion'd by the late

*Repentance and Funeral*

O F A  
Y O U N G M A N,

*Anno MDCLXXXI.*

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By J O H N S H O W E R.

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The SEVENTH EDITION.

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ECCLES. xii. i.

*Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy  
youth, while the evil days come not, nor the  
years draw nigh, when thou shalt say I have  
no pleasure in them.*

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**T O T H E**  
**R E A D E R.**

**A** *Nother edition of this plain sermon being desired, in hope that the seriousness of the subject, with the weight of the instance which gave occasion to it, might help to excite some or other to repentance, and further a due preparation for the last judgment; it will probably be expected that I should excuse the concealment of the person's name, on whose account it was preached. Unto which I have only this to say; that his name, character, and conversation, the circumstances of his sickness, his temper and expressions on a sick-bed, were then sufficiently known, to obviate the least insinuation of a forgery, as to what I have related concerning him. And as to any other particulars, which I have not recited, I reckon'd that the reader's benefit would be as little concern'd in the publication, as his curiosity is like to be dissatisfi'd, if he expect any other reason of its concealment.*

**J. S H O W E R.**

A F U N E R A L

S E R M O N.

ECCLESIASTES xi. 9.

*Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thy heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee unto judgment.*

**N**Otwithstanding our manifold advantages for serious religion in our younger years, and the contrary inconveniencies of deferring it to old age, or an indefinite hereafter; notwithstanding our frequent warnings by the death of others, to provide for our own, and the unspeakable hazard of a sick-bed repentance; yet how apt are the most in their youth and strength to forget their creator and themselves too! How prone to indulge carnal mirth and sensual delights! As supposing by a fatal prejudice and mistake, that obedience to God would introduce melancholy, destroy the chearfulness

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chearfulness of conversation, and spoil the sweetness of human life ; and thereupon refuse to bestow a serious thought about religion and another world, till God by sickness, or an hasty death, summon them to appear before his bar : upon which account it cannot be thought unseasonable, upon all occasions, to mind young persons of their sin and duty, their snares and dangers, their latter end, and final judgment.

What at this time directed my thoughts to such a subject, is not unknown to divers present, *viz. The death-bed repentance of a young man lately deceased*, who for some time past attended this lecture : I hope, at length, with some seriousness and profit ; though at first he came only with a design to carp and scoff, as with great remorse he told me in his last sickness.

And therefore, if there be any now come hither upon the *same errand*, and with the *same thoughts*, I pray God *command* their attention (for otherwise it would be vain for me to *beg* it) ; and accompany his own word with a powerful efficacy, to convince their judgments, and perswade their wills, and awaken their souls : [that they may go away with other apprehensions and resolutions than they came, as *this deceased penitent* once did ;] whose *repentance* and *funeral* may lead us to consider this affectionate *apostrophe* of the *wise man* in the text, *Rejoice, O young man in thy youth ; and let thy heart chear thee in the days of thy youth ; and walk in the ways of thy heart, and*



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*in the sight of thine eyes : but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.*

For the coherence of these words with the preceeding verses, we need only observe, that *Solomon* in the former chapters, having given many excellent rules for the quieting of our minds, and the comfort of our lives, under all that *vanity*, which he pronounc'd upon *this world*, he comes in this chapter to exhort us to prepare for *another*. For when all is done that can possibly be effected, in order to a contented and a happy life ; yet he tells us, that our *life* it self is vain and transient, our *death* inevitable, and that *the days of darkness will be many*, vers. 8. And then confutes that unreasonable inference, which the *young Epicure* is too prone to make, from such premises ; deriding his foolish pretence and plea, by an *Irony* : and yet endeavouring to awaken his conscience, by declaring the certainty of an *after reckoning*, and by a solemn citation of him before God's tribunal. For to this purpose, we may suppose the *young Sensualist* to retort the argument, "*Are all things vain ?*" "*Is life uncertain, and death and darkness*" "*near ? Let me then enjoy the light as long*" "*as I can ; let me indulge my appetite, and*" "*please my senses, and gratify my lusts, and*" "*make the best improvement of this vain,*" "*this short, uncertain life. Have I but a*" "*little time in which to enjoy this world ?*" "*Let me not make it shorter, by a stoical*" "*reservedness ; let me not lose this day, lest*" "*I ne-*

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“ I never have another ; but *eat and drink,*  
“ *for to morrow I may die.* ”

To which supposed objection, the *wise man*  
answers, in the words I have read, *rejoyce,*  
*O young man in thy youth, and let thy heart*  
*cheer thee in the days of thy youth ; q. d.* “ Let  
“ it do thee good, and bring thee joy ; be as  
“ merry as thou canst, and take all the satis-  
“ faction thy lust can procure ; if it be  
“ thought best, and most advisable to do so.”

*Walk in the ways of thy heart, and in the*  
*sight of thine eyes ; q. d.* “ Being resolved  
“ upon a short life and a merry one, baulk no-  
“ thing which thy lust doth dictate ; deny  
“ thy self nothing thy foolish heart can wish,  
“ or thy sensual appetite may crave. *But*  
“ *know for certain,* a day of reckoning is at  
“ hand, when God will call thee to an ac-  
“ count for thy sensual lust and youthful fol-  
“ lies. However *now* thou mayst stifle the  
“ convictions of thy conscience, by repeated  
“ debauches, and lewd company ; however  
“ *now* thou mayst make a shift to drown the  
“ sentiments of a reasonable soul, by the noise  
“ of riot ; or bring the pleasures of the *flesh,*  
“ to banish the presaging fears of thy immortal  
“ *spirit* : however now thou mayst flatter, or  
“ delude thy self, by the principles of a *Sad-*  
“ *ducee,* or please thy senses by the practice  
“ of an *Epicure ;*” yet *for all these things* God  
*will bring thee to judgment ; q. d.* “ Whe-  
“ ther thou wilt or no, a scrutiny shall be  
“ made into thy past actions, and an account  
“ must be given of thine ill-spent life : and  
“ for all the vanities of thy *youth,* and the

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“ sensual pleasures that now entice thee ;” God, (a terrible and a righteous God) will bring thee to his judgment seat.

And it follows V. 20. *Therefore remove sorrow from thy heart,* (by avoiding sin, which is the cause of sorrow) *and put away evil from thy flesh, for childhood and youth are vanity.*

From the words may be collected these three general heads of discourse, as comprehensive of the sum of the text.

I. In that Solomon makes use of an Irony, and so in mockery and derision bids the young man *rejoyce*, we may take notice, that *sinful mirth and sensual pleasure, is no real and substantial joy, fit for a wise man to chuse.* It hath but the appearance and name of joy ; for what is truly so, is no where to be had, without the fear of God, and the faithful keeping of his commandments.

II. In that he directs his discourse to the young man in particular, we have a plain intimation ; that young persons, of all others, are most apt to lay aside the fear of God, and forget their creator, through the temptations of sensual pleasures, and youthful lusts. —

III. Because he tells the young man, that even he must come to judgment, as an argument most proper to damp his carnal Mirth and Jollity, and put a Check to his pursuit of youthful Lusts ; we may hence observe, in what respects the consideration of a future judgment hath any force of argument, to persuade young persons to stop in their course of sin, and to remember their creator in the day of their youth.

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As to the first, I shall divide it into two branches, and so consider, 1. *That the carnal mirth of sinners hath but the appearance and name of joy*; being express'd by an irony: while on the contrary, they meet with trouble and sorrow, and dissatisfaction, in pursuit of their lusts.

2 *That the life of a serious christian in the fear of God, and the keeping his commandments, is the only chearful and merry life.* ✓

1st. *That sinful mirth and sensual pleasure hath but the appearance and name of joy.* Doubtless the thought of joy carrieth argument with it to *allure*, as that of sorrow to *dissuade*; on which account, we are commonly averse to serious practical religion, in our *younger years*, as supposing it would interfere with all the pleasures of human life, and doom us to a perpetual mourning, melancholy state; whereas the *irony* in the text may let us know, that while we *walk in the way of our own hearts*, and in the sight of our eyes, we deceive ourselves with the *shadow* of joy, and the name of *mirth*. ✓

'Tis true, he bids the young man here *rejoyce*, and let his heart *cheer* him, but it may be understood as if spoken in perfect *scorn* and *derision*: as knowing well that all his *mirth* and *cheerfulness* must be *false* and *spurious*, *vain* and *causeless*, less in *quantity*, and worse in *quality*, than the *rejoycing* of an upright christian. For as to sensual mirth, so grateful and charming to the generality of youth, either it depends upon their company, which sometimes begets *quarrels*, and *wounds without*  
cause;



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*cause*; \* or proves not suitable to their humour; or else ariseth from a particular *temper of body*, heighten'd by meats and drinks, and more than ordinary diet (and so hath more of the *beast* than of the *man*); and by consequence, must needs be of a short continuance, or else is the sole effect of *youth*, and so will undoubtedly decay, as they advance in age. However, it is in it self contemptible and base, as feigned and not sincere, as appearing and not real, as vain and without a foundation, as irrational and without a cause; and not contemptible only in *it self*, but likewise in relation to the *subject*, the inferior part of man: and much more in reference to the *object* of their carnal mirth, when 'tis not only sensual, but *forbidden* too; and as truly so in regard of the *duration* also, since it is easily disturb'd, and quickly gone.

How can it be imagin'd that a course of sin can give a man any solid mirth! When the men themselves are at such a vast expence of care, and pains, and trouble, of unavoidable fear, and shame, and anxious thoughts, either to contrive, or to accomplish, or to conceal their wicked purposes and practices; so that I need not ask that question, concerning the *joy* of the *epicure*, which *Job* † doth of the *hope* of the *hypocrite*, *what is it when God shall take away his soul?* But in the mean time, *what is it now?* What mirth and joy have they *for the present*? Who must rack their brains, and stretch their fancies, and employ their most solicitous and concern-

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\* Prov. xxiii. 29. † Job xxvii. 8.

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ed thoughts, how to make provision for their lusts †; and then must baffle their reason, and debauch their consciences, actually to enjoy them? For oftentimes a troublesome conscience lays so many rubs in their way, which they know not how to remove; starts so many objections, which they cannot answer; makes so many doubts and scruples, which they know not how to resolve and overcome; that if they will venture upon the sin, it must be even in despite of themselves.

Sometimes the very contrivance of their sins gives them sufficient uneasiness and trouble to spoil their mirth; such previous thoughtfulness being necessary to frame the model, to fix the time, to design the manner, and to order the circumstances of some impieties; and sometimes the wickedness *it self* is its own punishment.

Look upon the young sinner swelling in pride, or burning in lust, or drowning in sensuality; consider him rack'd with impatient desires, and burthen'd with unavoidable fears, lest his attempt be unsuccessful, or lest he be disappointed in the secrecy of the enjoyment, and his shame and folly publish'd to the world: and yet this is the merry life of the *sensual epicure*.

Besides, when by a custom and continuance in sin, the devil is in full possession, and lust upon the throne; what tyranny doth it exercise? And what a blind obedience must the sinner yield? How often are you forced to declare, that you approve of that, which your  
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† Rom. xiii. 14.

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mind condemns? How often you subscribe to that as true, which you know to be false? And so run headlong against the light of nature, and the checks of conscience, and surrender soul and body and all, to the will of satan, and the command of an imperious, domineering *lust*?

Now, what *mirth*, or *joy* can consist with such a servitude? Yea, while you *weary yourselves to commit iniquity* \*. What frequent vexations do you meet with, from the disappointment of your hopes; finding sorrow, where you looked for joy, an offensive stench instead of a perfume, and a noisome weed in the room of a flower? Still something *more*, and *further*, is thought necessary to your contentment and satisfaction and joy, than what you possess already: either the presence of somewhat which you cannot obtain; or the absence of somewhat which you cannot get rid off; or the continuance of somewhat which is not in your power to keep; or such a charge and variety as you cannot accomplish: and must this be concluded the only merry and joyful life?

Moreover, let a man but ask you on the *morrow*, what is become of the pleasure of *last night's debauch*? When there remains nothing but a sting in the conscience: where *then*, I pray, is your mirth and joy? For when once the heat of your wine and lust is over, and you dare take the liberty of sober thoughts, a guilty conscience will then tell you *your own*, and you shall hardly be able to stop its mouth.

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\* Jer. ix. 5.

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And though in part you may have washed away the sense of former *drunkenness* by more *wine*, or think to drown the voice of your bosom enemy, (the accuser within,) by running into jovial company, and an excess of riot; yet some smart affliction, or some sharp reproof, or some serious sermon, may set your sins in order again, and make your wounds to bleed afresh: and then *conscience* (notwithstanding your endeavours to stop its mouth, and smother its accusations) will not fail to lash the *drunkard*, and stone the *adulterer*, and make the lips of an *harlot* bite like a *cockatrice*. You shall hear its voice, and understand its errand, and feel a mortal qualm upon your spirits, from such *convictions* as you cannot easily stifle.

But if this be not the case of *all*, because *some* are given up to a *reprobate sense*; yet how often on a *sick-bed* doth the agitation of their own disturbed thoughts, set all in a flame *within*; when the *remembrance* of their *drunken excesses* gives them vinegar and gall to *drink*, and makes them *once more* sick; from that terrible thought, that for ought they know, the next *draught* may be of the *cup* of God's eternal wrath, in the lake of hell. When the remembrance of their *lustful hearts* gives them the sad *prospect* and *prælude* of unquenchable *fire*, into which they are sinking. When the *eccho* of their oaths and blasphemies (which stuck through the name of God) shall *pierce* their souls with an intolerable remorse; when a sad reflection on their past *prophaneness*, in scoffing at what is serious and holy, in ridiculing religion, and making a  
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mock of sin, shall put them into a fit of trembling, from the unavoidable fears of a judgment to come. Now if *this* be the ordinary state of their case, as most certain it is, well might the *wise man* expose their mirth to scorn, and by an *irony* give them leave to rejoice.

2. *That the joy of a righteous, holy person, is the only true and proper joy:* and the life of an upright christian, the only chearful and merry life.

Whereas some have inferred, that because there is a *woe* pronounced in scripture to those that *laugh*, and a *blessedness* to those that *mourn* and *weep* \* : that it is therefore necessary, if we will be serious christians, that we must be *sad* and *unsociable*, *melancholy* and *dejected*, and lead a life of continual complaints and sorrows. They might as well conclude a necessity of turning monks or beggars, because the scripture saith, that *it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven* †. For as to that part of a christian's life, which consists in the *contemplation of spiritual things*, the infinite excellency of the *objects* must render it *pleasant*. And as to that, which consists in *practice*, it must needs be *more so*; from the encouraging testimony of a good conscience, and the joy of the Holy Ghost; unspeakably more delightful and satisfactory, than the most ravishing *pleasures* the *epicure* can boast of. The best of *his* being short and transient, and mixed with some uneasiness and trouble. But the delights of an *holy soul*, are pure and substantial, durable and lasting, rising higher and encreasing

\* Luke vi. 25. Mat. v. 4. † Mat. xvi. 24.

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encreasing more, by the very enjoyment ; not easily interrupted by a change of outward circumstances and conditions in the world, nor broken on a sudden by little accidents that befall us unawares ; which is not to be denied in reference to sensual joy.

*Sirs*, who is it, that either is, or can be joyful ? That actually is so, or hath reason to be so, if not the upright *obedient christian* ?

Is not the continual presence of *God the Father, Son and Holy Ghost* ; and the constant ministry and attendance of his blessed *angels* a ground of joy ? He may then rejoice. Is not peace with God, and peace with conscience, and peace with the whole creation ; Is not redemption from the bondage of sin, from the slavery of the devil, from the sting of death, and the curse of the law, and God's eternal wrath, enough to make him *cheerful* ? He may then *rejoyce*.

If the favour of God and the acceptance of their persons, and services with him, be sufficient reason to dissuade from sadness ; they may then *eat their bread with joy, and drink their wine with a merry heart, for God accepteth both them and their work* \*.

If freedom of access to the *throne of grace* ; if a promise of being granted in whatsoever they ask ; if the highest assurance from a God, that cannot lie, that *all things shall work for good* ; if to dwell in his house, and sit at his table, and be related to him as to a father ; if to hear his word, and sing his praise, and receive the communications of his grace, the

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\* *Eccles. ix. 6.*

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pledges of his covenant love, and the comfortable foretastes of *everlasting joy*, be enough to make them *chearful*; they, and *they only* have a right to be so: and that *in every condition*. † Are they reproached and slandered? They may yet be *chearful*, because God will bring forth their righteousness as the light, and clear their integrity as the noon day †. Are they afflicted by poverty, or sickness, or disappointment in their designs and hopes? They may yet be *chearful*, and thank God for all the advantages and benefit of his wise dispensations of providence. Are they tempted by the devil? They may yet be *chearful*; § because God will shortly tread Satan under their feet, and not permit them to be tempted above what they are able. Do they suffer for righteousness sake? They may yet be *chearful*; yea, † rejoice and be exceeding glad, and count it all joy to receive such an honour. For there are promises, particularly referring to such a state, sufficient to encourage them; yea, to make them rejoice. Do they sometimes mourn with a godly sorrow? Yet may they still rejoice; since to consider the end, and effect of *that sorrow*, will give it a mixture of joy: and even their penitential tears do but clear their eyes to look up to heaven, with delight and comfort, and enable them the better to read a *pardon*. —

And here it were easy to shew, how their *faith*, and *hope*, and *love*, their *humility*, *meekness*, and *patience*; their *contentedness* with God's allotment, their *resignation* to his will, their *satisfaction* in his choice, their well-plea-

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† *Psal.* xxvii. 6.    *Rom.* xvi. 20.    § *1 Cor.* x. 13.    † *James* i. 2.

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*sedness with his order, their preparedness for every condition, their diligence in their callings, their moderation in the use of lawful things, and their innocency and harmlessness in their carriage and behaviour towards others, do all contribute to a chearful and a joyful life.*

Therefore, well might the Psalmist tell us,

*\* That the righteous shall be glad in the Lord, and all the upright in heart shall glory.*

And well might our Lord advise his disciples, not to be lifted up with the gift of miracles, but *† rejoice rather that their names were written in heaven.* And well might the apostle command christians to *rejoice*, (not by an Irony, as Solomon here speaks to the young man, but) in the most real and proper sense, *§ rejoice in the Lord always ; yea, and again, I say rejoice.*

Thus much for the first general.

II. Let us consider, in that Solomon directs his discourse to the *young man* in particular, we have thence a plain intimation, that *of all others young persons are most apt to neglect the fear of God, and be unmindful of their maker, through the temptation of sensual pleasures, and youthful lusts.*

Though God demand his right as soon as we are capable of understanding it ; and to serve the Lord from our youth is but just and reasonable, considering that so great a part of our life is already cut off by our infancy and childhood ; though the longer we delay, the greater difficulty shall we meet with, whenever we set about it ; though our whole life at longest (*as soon as we are capable, and as*

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*\* Psal. lxiv. 10. † Luke x. 20. § Phil. iv. 4.*



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*long as we live*) should be devoted to God, and it is all little enough, if we consider its relation to our eternal state ; though the sooner we begin, the more welcome we shall be, and the more acceptable our obedience ; yea, though an *early piety* be the only hopeful method, to prevent the hazard of a sudden death, and the uncomfortable reflections of old age, and the intolerable pangs of a death-bed remorse ; yet such is the power of original sin in young persons ; such and so many, are the snares of youth, and those so agreeable to their vicious inclinations ; such the force of prejudice ; such the artifices of the devil ; and so prevalent the persuasions of evil company : we are usually so proud, ignorant, and unexperienced ; so rash, hasty, and unadvised, and so easily infected with sadducism, and the principles of infidelity , so loth to assent to any such premises, whose conclusion will infer the necessity of changing our present course ; that such, of all others, do most need a serious admonition to remember their latter end, and final judgment, lest through the temptations of sensual mirth and pleasure, they *put the evil day far from them.*

For (alas!) how seldom do we consider in youth, what we are ! And why we were made ! Or what is our business in the world ! And what will be the end of our present course ! Whereas one thought of God and our last judgment should be enough to drown all other thoughts, as the noise of a cannon doth that of a whisper.

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Sense is so prevalent, and reason so weak, we are so much inclined to the one, and so unwilling to be led by the other ; that toys and trifles, sports and recreations, and the vanities of fools and children possess our hearts, and employ our time : neither looking behind us, to what we have either done, or been ; nor before us, whither we are going ; and what in all likelihood will be the period of our present mirth, and the sad *Catastrophe* of your youthful lusts. +

Young persons will hardly be convinced, but that *now* is their season to be brisk, and jovial ; having time (as they count) to command, and the world before them : they will not be persuaded, but that it is time enough to think of death, when they are arrested by sickness, or withered by old age. | Let them be concerned about another world, who are leaving *this*. \ Their blood now is warm, and their spirits are nimble, their senses are quick, and their passions strong ; they will *walk in the way of their own hearts, and in the sight of their eyes* ; and ordinarily split upon that rock of *evil company*, where so many thousand vessels at their *first launching out* have been dashed in pieces. Besides, their age is most inviting to the devil, to bend his chiefeſt forces against them, rather than against *children, or aged persons* ; — the former not being capable of making a choice, and the latter being fixed and resolved in their way : | his principal endeavours therefore are levelled against *youth* ; to draw off their hearts from God and holy things, and to divert their thoughts from the confi-

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deration of death and judgment, which would otherwise restrain and check them, in pursuit of their lusts : and this brings me to the third general, to consider.

III. *That for all these things God will bring us to judgment ; and therein what arguments the thoughts of a future judgment may rationally suggest, to damp the carnal mirth of young persons, and ever persuade them to remember their creator in the days of their youth.*

There are many might be drawn from this passage, as that *there is a judgment to come ; that young persons shall be brought to judgment ; that God will bring them to judgment ; the God who made them, whom they forgot and neglected ; who neither wants power or will to make good his word : that for all these things, for all the ways of youthful lust and folly, thou shalt be brought to judgment.* Primarily for our affections and thoughts, for *the ways of our heart*, and for the works of our hands, and the words of our mouth, as proceeding from them. And that this is so unquestionably certain, that all might know it ; and of so much consequence, that even in youth it should be known and considered.

To enforce this argument, I might here mind you of the mischief you will do to others by an ill example ; and of the aggravation of your sin by employing the *best of your time* in the devil ; which must needs make judgment more terrible, in that your final doom, and the consequences of it, will be the more severe.

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*to prepare for Judgment.* 315

I might tell you, that the sooner you repent, the more hopeful is your case in reference to a pardon: I might largely describe the happy influence of an *early piety*, with respect to the future part of your lives; to direct your chance, and govern our actions, and prevent a great deal of sin and shame, sorrow and repentance: I might mention the comfortable reflections in old age upon a well-spent life; your capacity of greater service to God now, and the assurance of a weightier crown of glory hereafter, with all the other considerable benefits, that have respect either to a safe and happy life, a comfortable old age, and a peaceable death, or a joyful resurrection, and a blessed eternity: all which will come under the argument in the text; and what I shall say of it, may be comprized under the following particulars.

1. Let young persons consider, that notwithstanding their present mirth and jollity, yet the *judgment of God is infallibly certain*. It is an unquestionable, undoubted truth, *that for all these things, God will bring thee to judgment*.

2. Consider that this judgment is *near at hand*, and will shortly take place. —

3. Consider your summons may be sudden, before you are aware. —

4. Consider that youth and health is the *fittest time to prepare for this judgment of God*. —

5. That if through the temptations of carnal mirth and youthful lusts, you neglect your preparation, it is more than probable, *that your passage by death to this judgment of God, will be very uncomfortable and full of horror*. —

6. That



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6. That *this judgment itself, and its immediate consequences, will be intolerably dreadful to unprepared sinners, whether young or old.*

1. Consider, that notwithstanding your present mirth and jollity, yet *this final judgment is infallibly certain.* Knowing the terror of the Lord, said the apostle, and *here know* that for these things God will bring to judgment. What is here affirmed concerning *persons*, is asserted likewise concerning things in the next Chapter, *That God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil* \* : methinks I need not tell you, that the doctrine of this judgment is declared in scripture with the greatest plainness, confirmed by the strongest evidence, and pressed upon the conscience with the most enforcing arguments ; or that most of the objections on the behalf of the *Sadducee*, and the sensual *epicure*, are so very weak and trifling, that if their lusts were not stronger than their argument, they themselves would be ashamed to offer them. ✕

For whosoever disbelieves a future judgment, must either conclude that the *Almighty God cannot*, or *that the righteous God will not* call us to an account for what we have received and done : though his absolute *omnipotence* doth assure us, that he *can*, and his invariable *truth* (having declared his purpose) that undoubtedly he *will*. -

And can we think, that all the assurance of this judgment of God, which the scripture

\* Eccles. xii. 14.

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ture gives us; that all those plain assertions concerning the judge himself, and the persons to be judged, and the consequence of the judgment, and the certainty of it; that they are only *terms of art* to affright the world, and not *real*, certain truths, which will take effect according to their natural meaning? Can we suppose, that the whole account is *perfect fiction* and mere *romance*? Contrived on purpose to keep the world in due *decorum*, and so to prevent some bad effects, only in reference to the present state of things, which would probably follow, if this belief did not obtain? Whereas is it not necessary, that there should be a judgment-day, for the conviction and condemnation of great sinners, that scorn the legislative authority of God, and trample on his government, and are above the check and controul of human laws? Is it not necessary to manifest the righteousness of God, as *ruler* of the world, in rendring to every man according to his works, and to uphold the honour of his wise *government*, whereof *judgment* is as necessary and essential a part as *legislation*? (The latter without the former being little else than shew and mockery :) Is it not necessary, for the vindication of religion from that contempt and scorn that is poured upon it? Is it not necessary, to unriddle the mysteries of divine providence? And disclose the secret wickedness of hypocrites? And put a difference between those that serve him, and those that refuse to do so? Necessary moreover to rectify the mistakes, and false opinions, that are abroad in the world,

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world, concerning God, and Christ, and holiness, and sin? And to put an end to controversies, and determine the differences concerning what is truth and what is error? These and such like things considered, (besides the *authority* of divine writ,) do *morally assure* us, that there will be an after reckoning, and a final judgment. And shall not one serious thought of the *certainty* thereof, give a check to your carnal mirth? And cast a damp upon your sensual joy? And abate your heat, and vigour in a course of sin? For did we but believe, that *for all these things God will bring us to judgment*, could we so readily entertain the temptations of the devil, and fall such an *easy prey* to his devices? How could so many unhappy *youths* invade their own damnation, and snatch it as it were out of the hands of justice? Thrust away their present and future happiness? And fly into the devil's arms, in the pursuit of their youthful lusts; though they have been told so plainly, and warned so frequently of a future judgment? How could these things be, if they did but believe the *certainty* of this final judgment? And how dreadful will be their case, who are not awakened till they find it to be so? Who will not acknowledge this judgment of God, till they know the dreadfulnefs and terror of it, by being brought to their trial? Who will not believe, that God will ever call them to an account, till a final impenitence, joined with their infidelity, bring them under his condemning sentence. †

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*to prepare for Judgment.* 319

2. Consider, that *this judgment is at hand, and will shortly take place.* As death will consign us over to God's tribunal; so childhood and youth, manhood and old age are but several stages, that hasten us to death. † *Yet a little while*, and we must *go the way of all living*: how concerned and thoughtful soever now we are about this world, we must shortly bid adieu, and take our leave. / Even the *man of business* must find a time to die, and give an account of his stewardship; though he allow himself *little or none*, to prepare for death and judgment. Our *youth and strength* is quickly gone; we soon decline and languish into dust; as soon as we begin to live, we are hastening to the end of our life. / As a candle, as soon as it begins to burn, or an hour-glass as soon as it is turned, doth hasten to its end: (our life withering like a \* *Flower*, and passing like a watch in the night.) We must die shortly, and much sooner than they who lived in the first ages of the world. As *death* is the certain consequence of *old age*, so *those evil days* (as the wise man calls them) do still *draw near*, and will quickly overtake us, whether we eat, or drink, or sleep; whether we be sad or merry; whether we talk or are silent; whether we work or are idle; whether we are studious or careless; whether we prepare for death and judgment, or whether we despise and avoid such thoughts: and yet how do the most spend their youthful days in vanity and sin? With a careless neglect of God and their salvation, in *gluttony and drunkenness, in chambering*

† *Job xvi. 22.*

\* *1 Pet. i. 24. Psal. xc. 4.*



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*chambering and wantonness, not putting on the Lord Jesus, nor walking in his spirit ; but making provisions for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof.* † As if *this day of the Lord* were a great way off, at a mighty distance : whereas our Judge is *at the door*, and the *end of all things* doth approach, and it cannot be long ere all the world must receive their doom. —

A believing thought of this would certainly imbitter the pleasures of sin, would quench our fond desires, and check our foolish hopes, and spoil the relish of our carnal joy ; would blast the beauty, and darken the lustre of worldly greatness ; would sadden the delights, and weaken the temptations of fleshly pleasures. For what satisfaction can that man take in jovial company, in the pastimes of children, and the laughter of fools, who is verily persuaded, that *ere long* he must appear to judgment ? How can he be enamoured of this *earth*, and after serious deliberation be fond of outward grandeur ; who believes and knows, that shortly § *the earth itself shall be burnt up*, the trumpet of the Arch-angels sound, and our glorious judge summon all mankind before his bar, by that thundring voice, *arise ye dead and come to judgment* ? And can we grant this *day of the Lord*, to be not only certain, but *near at hand*, and not think it time to prepare for our solemn appearance ? Shall we contradict our principles, and live in a repugnancy to our avowed creed, under the plain censure of notorious *hypocrisy* or *folly* ? The *first*,  
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† Rom. xii. 13, 14.

§ 2 Pet. iii. 10.

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from our profession, if we do not believe it; the *second*, from the unsuitableness of our practice, in case we do.

3. Consider *that your summons to this judgment of God may be sudden and unexpected, and overtake you unawares.* When God will require your souls to appear before his tribunal, how soon, or suddenly he will do it, you cannot say. The *time* and *place* of our death, in kindness and wisdom, are concealed from us, that we may *every where* stand upon our guard, and *every moment* expect our call to judgment. Because we know not whether God by sickness will advertise us of our approaching end, or his stroke be sudden by an unexpected casualty. And therefore *Moses* speaking to the *Jews* †, as to one man, saith of God, *He is thy life, and the length of thy days; q. d.* The shortning or prolonging of thy days is in the hand of God. Hence some are taken the first hour, and some at the third, and some at the sixth, and some at the ninth, and others let alone till the eleventh; but that is a great uncertainty: for we may be surpris'd. Innumerable accidents attend us every where, that may blot our names out of the *book of life*, and suddenly confine us to the chambers of death. It may be, *this day* we are jovial, and in health among our friends, and wordly affairs; and *to morrow* arrested with a summons to judgment. In the *morning* in chase of earthly honour, riches, or delights; and in the *evening* laid out for our funeral, by various

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† Deut. xxx. 20.

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rious accidents not now foreseen by us, or by any of our friends.

We may be cut off, while we presume on hereafter, while we resolve to repent, in the midst of our holy purposes, before they are performed : for though we read in scripture of the *sinner of an hundred years old, that he shall be accursed* ; yet we have no example of *one in a thousand*, that lives to that age. *This young person*, whose funeral occasioned my discourse, not many days since, was as strong and healthful, and as likely to live as any of us ; and it is a very great question, whether *you and I* may have *so much time* and space to repent upon a *sick-bed*, as he had ; who enjoyed his senses, and the use of his reason to the very last. *This day* therefore cannot be too soon to prepare, because *to morrow* may be too late : every unprepared sinner being exposed to as many hazards of everlasting destruction, as there may be accidents to surprize him with a sudden death.

4. Consider, that *youth and health is the fittest time to prepare for this final judgment.*

As to the former, if we but reflect on the manifold infirmities of old age ; that weakness of body, and that decay of parts which doth usually accompany that state ; the hardening of their hearts by a custom and continuance in sin ; the loss of memory and quick apprehension ; the want of those vigorous affections, and flexible inclinations, which they had in youth, (which makes it more difficult to convince and persuade them ; ) such

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considerations as these should be enough to discourage us from adventuring to delay.

Besides this, how can *such* persons expect to find acceptance with *God* in the dregs of their time, after the mispending of an whole life to *his* dishonour? For though I would not discourage their utmost endeavours, and thro' the mercy of *God* in *Christ*, there is hope enough to prevent a total despair; yet what can we suppose should be the substance of such a man's prayer, but to this effect?

“ Lord! I have wasted my days in sin;  
“ and sacrificed the flower of my age to sport  
“ and folly, to the provocation of thy justice,  
“ and the hazard of my salvation; the *best* of  
“ all my *time*, I must confess, hath been devoted  
“ to the will of *satan*, and devoured  
“ by my lusts: but I here present thee with  
“ the *lees* and refuse of my strength and age;  
“ the little fragments, and poor remainder  
“ which they have left: I beseech thee, for  
“ the sake of *Christ*, to receive me now at  
“ last, though I did obstinately deny obedience  
“ to thy earlier calls, and wilfully refused to  
“ return sooner: though now my strength,  
“ as well as my body, is bowed down to the  
“ grave, and I am hardly capable of doing  
“ thee any service; yet deny me not, O Lord,  
“ to live with thee in the other world, though  
“ I have lived so long without thee in this.”

What prevalency, do we imagine, is there like to be in so *weak an address*? Without a sovereign extraordinary grace, to relieve the exigence of such sad and discouraging circumstances, how little hope is there, when you



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cannot consider upon any subject for a quarter of an hour, without manifold interruptions?

And then as to *health*; that for certain is the most *proper time* to prepare for judgment: let us but suppose the young sinner seized by a fit of *sickness*, if the acuteness of the disease do not influence the brain and cause a *delirium*, yet is *that* a time to repent, and make your peace with God, and provide for your appearance before his judgment-seat? For usually the understanding is then clouded, the fancy then disturbed, the passions disordered, and the thoughts distracted. —

Consider seriously, what is wont to be the *burry* of a violent distemper; suppose restlessness, through heat, or pain, or want of sleep; or suppose the physician should mistake thy case, or the devil use his subtilty and malice to deceive or terrify thy guilty soul; and then tell me, whether a *sick-bed* be a fit season to prepare for judgment? May not thy thoughts have work enough to struggle with thy pains, or to settle thine estate, or regard thy mourning friends about thee? When thy pulse is low, and thy breath short, and thy spirits almost gone, thy sins many, and thy fears great, and thou hast hardly sufficient strength to get rid of a clot of spittle; Is that a time to enter the lists with *principalities and powers*, and all the rules of outer darkness? Besides, it is the case of many, that the *nearer* they approach to death, the *less* apt they are to believe it: and so perish in their security, being totally unconcerned about a future judgment.

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But supposing the free use of reason, and an awakened apprehension likewise of what refers to their immortal souls, and their eternal abode, I then add, —

5. That if, through the enticements of youthful lusts, you now neglect to prepare, it is very probable (and you may justly fear it) that *your passage, by death, to this judgment of God will be very uncomfortable, and full of horror*: whether repentance on the brink of the grave, after a wicked life, may be saving or no, is not the question. Through an extraordinary act of grace, (whereof the penitent thief was an instance) it cannot be denied — *possible*: but when its *sincere* and *saving*, who can tell any otherwise, than as in charity we must hope the best? For as to the *persons* themselves, on a sick and death-bed, how can they in an *ordinary* way be assured of their sincerity? It is therefore probable, that their last sickness will be very *uncomfortable*, though their repentance should prove *sincere*, and their souls be saved in the day of Christ.† For suppose, when their sins stare them in the face, and they did never *till now* bethink themselves of the necessity of a pardon; that *satan* should now tell them, that their repentance comes *too late*, to meet with that mercy they so long abused.† Suppose he tell them, that it is all owing to their *fears* of death, and the apprehended dreadful consequences of dying. — If he should tell them, that the pleasures of sin are lost, and so the *bait* to entice them gone; that every thing about them looks sad and mournful; and such a *change* of their

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dition, from health to sickness and the gates of death, must needs alter their resolutions and thoughts. ✠ If he should tell them, that the *nearness of eternity* cannot but make a person, who hath space to consider, more apprehensive of *another world*, and concerned about it, than at other times; and that if sickness and death were at a greater distance, they would still be the same that ever they were; which is too sadly probable, from the *many examples* of those, who have returned to their *former sins*, as soon as they returned to their *health*; and left all their repentance, their holy thoughts, and good resolutions, in that sick-bed, where at first they took them up. If the devil suggest such a temptation as this to the sick penitent, who *hath hitherto walked in the way of his own heart, and in the sight of his eyes*; What can he reply, or plead on his own behalf, to make proof of the sincerity of his repentance to himself or to those about him? However, it may become us to consider seriously, that God doth oftentimes in righteous judgment open the eyes of *great sinners* on a death-bed; and fill their souls with an amazing horror from the fears, and foresight of his approaching vengeance. When they cannot but apprehend, that their sinning season is *now* expired, their mirth and jollity over, their final judgment at hand, and their bodies and souls within a few hours to part, and so be divided between the *grave* and *hell*. You will then admit other thoughts of God, and his terrible judgment, than at present in your careless health; bitterly reflecting on  
your

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your past follies, in the days of your youth, and freely condemning your former choice. — The serious review of your sensual joys, (which are fled as a shadow, and vanished like a cloud of smoke) shall give you an unexpressible remorse and shame: having bartered away your souls for such a thing of nought, and ventured your eternal salvation, and for ever lost it, for a trifling lust. —

“ Was my God, my soul, and my salvation, of no greater value? (*will you then be forced to say*) of no greater value, than  
“ so easily to be parted with, for the short  
“ satisfaction of a brutish forbidden pleasure? —  
“ Must I leave this world I loved so dearly,  
“ and bid adieu for ever to all its enjoyments? —  
“ Are all my good days past? Is all my mirth  
“ and joy concluded, and nothing but eternal sorrows to be expected? Must all my  
“ mirth and laughter be exchanged for tears  
“ and howling? My ease and pleasure, for  
“ insupportable, remediless torments? Must  
“ my guilty soul be thus torn from my body,  
“ and from all things in which it took delight,  
“ to be dragged and hurried to a dismal  
“ place, where it will hate to live, and yet  
“ cannot die? Must I sport, and sing and  
“ revel it no more? Must I brave it out in  
“ pride no longer, and relish the delights of  
“ sense *no more, no more*, for ever? And  
“ which is worse, *infinitely worse*; Must I  
“ make my appearance before my offended  
“ judge? whose threatnings I derided, whose  
“ wrath I provoked, whose commands I contradicted, whose servants I reproached? &c.  
“ Must



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“ Must I now appear before the dreadful tri-  
 “ bunal of this just, this holy, this inexo-  
 / “ rable judge? Is there no hope of escaping  
 “ in the crowd, and so avoid a trial? Or is  
 “ there no possibility of an excuse, when ar-  
 “ raigned before his bar? Or is there no me-  
 “ thod to be found, to evade the execution of  
 “ his terrible judgment? Must I hear, and  
 “ hear to my confusion, that epitome of hell  
 / “ comprized into a sentence; *Depart, depart*  
 “ *from me ye cursed into everlasting fire?*  
 “ Oh! what shall I be able to say for myself,  
 “ when my own conscience brings the charge,  
 “ and reads the indictment, and I cannot dis-  
 “ own, or deny one article of what I am  
 “ accused? ”

All the mercies you have received from God,  
 all the instructive afflictions you have at any  
 time met with; all the awakening sermons  
 you have heard, all the motions of *God's spi-*  
*rit*, and the rebukes of *your own*, which you  
 have resisted; all the calls of his word, the  
 warnings of his providence, and the threat-  
 nings of his wrath, which you have slighted;  
 your knowledge of your danger, your time and  
 space to repent, your former confessions of sin,  
 your convictions of guilt, your purposes to  
 reform, the reproofs you have had from o-  
 thers, and the promises you have made your-  
 selves, may all be mustered up to your awak-  
 ened thoughts, to seize your souls with horror  
 and confusion, when you are called by death  
 to pass to this judgment of God.

And now, *christians*, it is probable you  
 may suppose and hope that this will be your case;  
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yet the present instance of this *unhappy youth*, may convince you that it is possible, and more than possible. For though I never saw him (to my knowledge) save on his *death bed*, yet having expressed his own desires, that others might take warning by his *example*, I need not scruple to acquaint you, (with what I learnt from himself, and is well known to his surviving companions) that during his health, he did *put the evil day far from him*: and yet was very apprehensive of a future judgment, and concerned at his own unpreparedness, in his *last sickness*; most heartily confessing with many tears, that he had indulged to youthful lusts, delighted in wicked company, lived in the prophanation of the sabbath, and made a mock of every thing almost that was serious: and this notwithstanding the counsels of his friends, and some checks of his own conscience. He sadly bemoaned his forlorn state, as having little or no hope to find mercy at the hand of God; penitently confessing his his own wilfulness and folly, that procured it to himself: and thereupon cried out in the bitterness of his soul, to this effect. “ Oh! “ had I *believed* and *known*, what now I do; “ I would have been more concerned to secure my everlasting interest; I would have taken more care to avoid temptation; I would have employed my time to better purposes, and attended the ministry of the word in another manner, &c. But I fear it is *now too late*. ” And then with the greatest importunity did beg of God to pardon and forgive him, for the sake of Christ: then tossing  
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from place to place, wringing his hands, and lifting up his eyes to heaven, (with the affecting vehemence of a despairing soul) did beseech the assistance of those about him, to seek to God on his behalf. “ Oh ! pray for me, pray for me, for Christ’s sake pray for me ; that if yet mercy may be had, the Lord would take pity on a miserable sinner. O my sins are a burden too heavy for me to bear ! I have sinn’d, tho’ God stood by, and saw me : I have sinn’d, tho’ my conscience did rebuke me for it. Again, I have sinn’d, tho’ I resolv’d to sin no more ; I know not what to do, or which way to turn, &c.” for with such words as these did he bewail himself, and signify the horrors of an accusing conscience. Nevertheless, for the support of his relations, and the encouragement of all returning sinners, I am willing to add, that a little before his change, (which was sudden and unexpected, when his friends began to entertain some hopes of his recovery) his spirit was more compos’d and calm, his distracting terrors much abated ; and the overwhelming fears of death and judgment, very much subdu’d and overcome.

In his confessions of sin, he own’d and aggravated his crimes with the greatest freedom, with a deep remorse of spirit, and an hearty serious sense and feeling of what he spake. He did not go about to palliate or excuse his former wickedness, to lessen or diminish it, by shifting the blame on the subtilty of the devil, the bias and inclination of a bodily temper, the corruption of human nature, or the persuasions of *evil company*, &c. altho’ *this last* he did

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did very much lament, as the greatest snare to his soul, and a principal occasion of his youthful sins, and apprehended ruin. —

Among other *sins* which an accusing conscience told him of, *one* that did more particularly affect his heart, and burden his soul, was the *sin of lying*; I mention this with an unfeigned desire, that all young persons (apprentices especially) would remember this example, and resolve against it.

There is *one thing more*, which I named first, and would here take notice of, I mean, *his scoffing humour*; and *this* he acknowledged with a great deal of remorse and shame; that when first he was an hearer in this place, he came with a design to *droll upon the sermon*, and *deride the young preacher*: but not meeting with any thing on which to break a jest, or occasion mirth and laughter, nothing but what was serious, and suited to the solemn work and service of a sabbath, he resolv'd to come again, and accordingly, for some time, did so, (I cannot say how long) with other thoughts of my brethren and me, and of the serious plainness of this our way of worship, than his former ignorance and prejudices would suffer him to admit; and, thanks be to God, *be is not the only instance of this kind*. —

Therefore I cannot but subjoin, that as religion is not the less excellent, because some fools despise it; nor sin the less destructive, because there be some atheistical scoffers who make a mock of sin; neither is plain and serious preaching (with the purity and simplicity of gospel worship) any whit the more contemptible,



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temptible, because some that *fit in the chair of scorners*, deride and run it down; since these kind of scoffers, are usually such as cast off all thoughts of God, and an after-reckoning, and are no way influenced by the consideration of a future life; to whom *heaven and hell* are words of *sport*, and the *sacred scripture* matter of *derision*. —

For none, methinks, who are serious in the practice of religion, and make a conscience of their words and actions, should dare to make a mock of the *worship of God*, or those that join therein, whether ministers or people, only upon the account of some *little difference*, from that method and way of worship, which they like best, when the *substance* and design of *both* is apparently the same, and believ'd to be so. Did men but *understand* what they *profess* by owning christianity; did they but *believe* what they *understand*, and *practise* what they pretend to believe, a meer reverence and just regard to holy things, would most certainly give a check to this *scoffing humour*, in reference to those who cannot, in all respects, conform to their measures.

6. Lastly, *Consider the dreadfulnefs and the terror of this final judgment, in its self, and its certain and immediate consequences to every unprepared sinner, whether young or old.*

When the *blessed Jesus* shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, to take the throne by his Father's order, and judge the world in righteousness; when *he* that stoop'd from heaven to earth, to be a sacrifice for sin; who endur'd the contradiction of sinners a-

gainst

*to prepare for Judgment.* 333

gainst himself, in the days of his flesh, suffer'd the cruelty of men, and the wrath of his Father, and the cursed death of the cross, upon our account ; when he shall come again as *the judge of quick and dead*, we shall *then* have other thoughts of *him*, and of ourselves, than we now entertain.

Sirs, he *now* offers you a pardon, as the purchase of his death, on easy, honourable, and advantageous terms ; but it will be *then* too late, and in vain to beg it. He *now* warns you of your danger, and tells you, that the end of youthful lusts is death and judgment, and eternal wrath. And *then* you shall know that he spake in earnest, and his words were true. Now, as a merciful redeemer, he entreats you to be reconcil'd ; he shall *then* be cloathed with vengeance, and appear, to your confusion, as a terrible judge.

*At first* he came in the form of a servant, to make our peace with God, and was thereupon despised and rejected of men. But he shall shortly *come again*, to render vengeance to those that would not know him as a prince and a prophet ; would not receive his message, and yield obedience to his holy gospel. Now he offers life, (*eternal life*) and begs your acceptance of it ; but he will *then* punish your ungrateful refusal of his offered mercy. Now he entreats you to be happy, and have compassion on yourselves ; but *then* he will be as deaf to your *entreaties*, as you have been to his ; and that, tho' you should urge him with the greatest importunity possible ; tho' you beseech him by the mercifulness of his nature,

X

by

### 334 *An Exhortation to Youth,*

by the freeness of his invitation, by the compassion of his death, by the merit of his sufferings, by the kindness of his sacrifice, by the grace of his gospel, &c. *Now* you will not believe his *promises*; but *then* you shall experience the execution of his *threatnings*. *Now* you will not *hearken* to his advice and warning, but you shall *shortly* feel the sad effects of your contempt and obstinacy. *Now* you will not be constrain'd by his dying love; but *ere long* you shall know the power of his wrath, whether you will or no; for tho' *at present* he offer you life, yet, upon your refusal, he will *shortly* pronounce the sentence of eternal death: *as yet* he invites you to him, but *then* he will bid you depart; *Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.*

From that *God*, after whose image you were created, in whose favour stands your life; from that *Saviour* who redeemed you by his precious blood; and from that *Holy Spirit*, who would have sanctified you by his grace.

*Depart from me*, and from all hopes of salvation by me. *From me*, and all the blessed company of saints and angels, that shall live with me for ever.

*Depart from me*, abandoned to an everlasting *curse*, (of which both souls and bodies shall be the wretched unhappy subjects) into *exquisite torments* set forth by fire; and *such* as were originally design'd for the *apostate spirits*, of whom the scripture doth suppose *one* to be the principal ring-leader of all the rest, and who are therefore termed his angels.

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to prepare for Judgment. 335

+ They who tempted you to sin, shall deride your folly, and triumph in your ruin, and be your constant perpetual tormentors ; since the *fire is unquenchable, and never goeth out*. The wicked shall go away into *everlasting punishment* \*, as the righteous into *life eternal*. +

Nevertheless, how dreadful soever this *sentence* must needs be, it is not more intolerable in itself, than *unavoidable* to the sinner ; for where will you hide from his *all-seeing eye* ? Or how will you resist the force of his *almighty arm* ? As it will be in vain to think of *supporting* his wrath, so every whit as vain to imagine a possibility of *escaping* it. Will the tears of a despairing sinner extinguish the fire of God's wrath, and quench the flames of hell ? Will his wishing he had been wiser in the least avail, when the charge is prov'd, and the sentence past ? Whither would you flee from the justice of the judge ? *Whither* ? But to the mercy of a Saviour ? But *this Saviour* is now the *judge*, and become your *enemy* : a sight of whom shall awaken the most slumbering conscience, and make the *never dying worm* gnaw your very heart : when you shall be minded of the calls and invitations you refused, and the warnings you slighted, the convictions you stifled, and the vows you broke ; and you be forced to reflect on the vanities of your youth, and sadly look back on the time past of your ignorance and folly.

When, for a *light temptation*, you run the hazard of this *heavy punishment* ; when, for a *temporal pleasure*, you ventured an *endless torment* ;

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\* Mat. xxv. ult.



*Read June 13<sup>th</sup> 1857*  
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ment ; for a mix'd delight, an unmix'd pain ;  
 for a momentary satisfaction, an eternal wrath ;  
 for a short sin, an everlasting sorrow. O  
*eternity, eternity ! Is it true, or rather, can it*  
*possibly be false*, that after millions of ages un-  
 der the wrath of God, it will not then be past  
*the beginning of sorrows*, but an everlasting  
 vengeance will be *yet to come*, and will *ever* be  
 to come ? O cursed be my wicked compa-  
 nions, that inticed me to sin, and so to ruin ;  
 or rather, cursed be my own stupidity and  
 folly, that I would not be persuaded to believe  
 what *now* I know and feel ! Oh ! that I were  
 on earth *again*, and had the benefit of one  
 month's space, in order to a second trial ! O  
 that I had never seen the light ! Or that the  
 earth had open'd and swallow'd me up in my  
 cradle ! or rather, Oh ! that *in time* I had re-  
 ceiv'd instruction, and hearken'd to reproof !  
 Oh ! that *in time* I had believ'd what I *was*  
 told so plainly, and warned of so faithfully,  
 concerning God, and his righteous judgment.

Now, that this may never be the case of any  
 of us, let me conclude with the advice of the  
 prophet, \* *Give glory to the Lord your God, be-*  
*fore he cause darkness, and before your feet stum-*  
*ble upon the dark mountains, and while ye look*  
*for light, he turn it into the shadow of death,*  
*and make it gross darkness.* —

\* Jer. xiii. 16.

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F I N I S.



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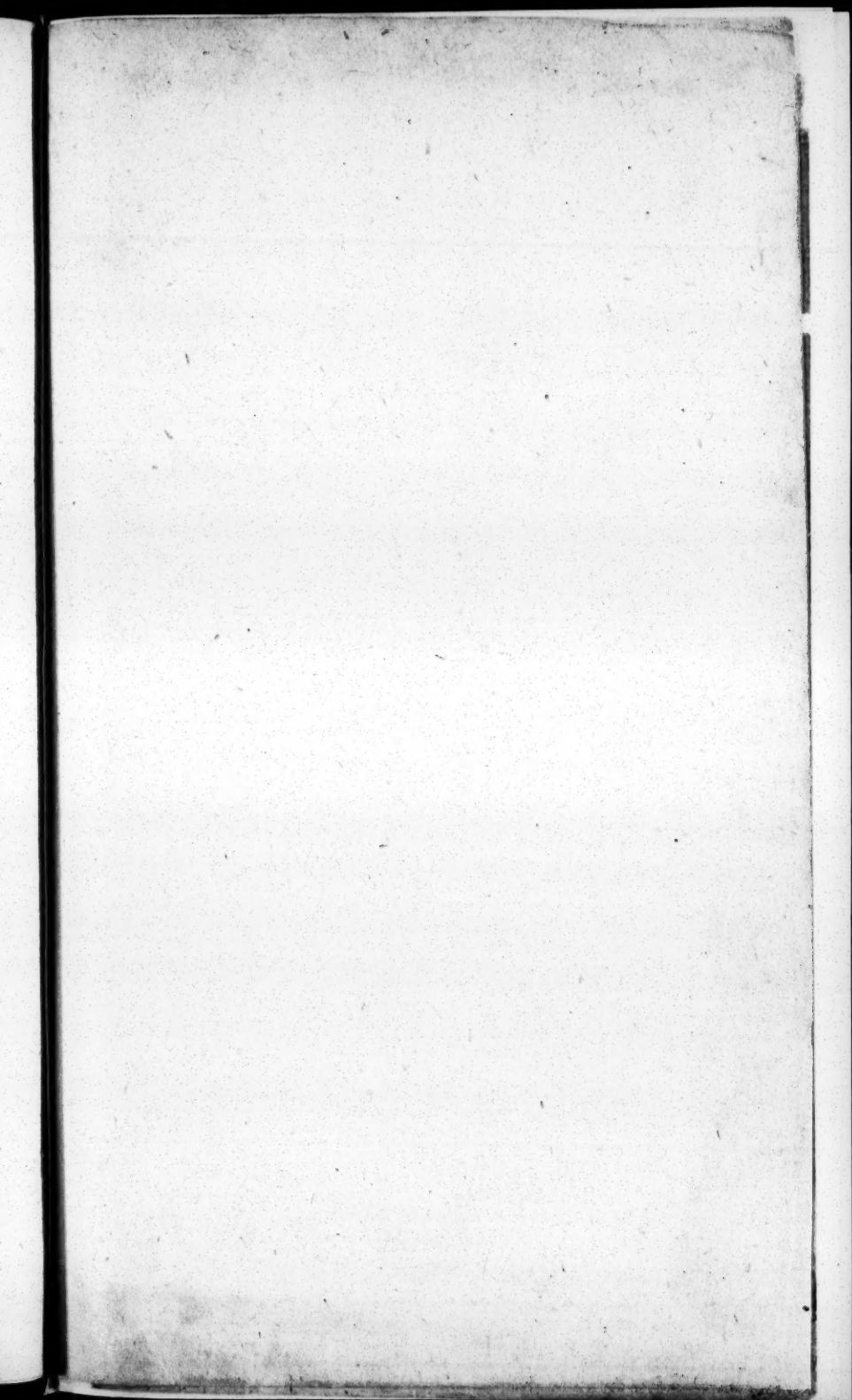
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